

FOR ALL MEN

OPTIMIZING AMERICAN JURISPRUDENCE



T.J. GREER

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I. Making Sense of the Divided States of America

“One of America's richest self-made women quit her job to cook marijuana edibles—now her net worth is \$225 million.” - CNBC (Colorado)

“Two Georgia players arrested on marijuana charges.” - Albany Herald (Georgia)

In the United States of America, there is no equal protection under our federal law. This is because of inconsistent, conflicting, and inhumane state, county, and city laws. We also have judges with too much concentrated power and citizen juries of people mostly, if not all, lacking a solid legal education. This is unacceptable. We have defendants with paid lawyers, undermining the entire premise of equality as described in the constitution. The death penalty, life sentencing, jails, and prisons are all hallmarks of uncivilized governments. This is unacceptable. We have uneducated police with privileged legal statuses. This is barbaric. This is unacceptable. We have pervasive poverty, racism, sexism, bullying, mobbing, militarism, primitive individualism, disdain for environmentalism, overemphasis on blind justice, and little emphasis on general healthcare and rehabilitative healthcare. We must do better than this.

II. Unifying Law in America

The United States, while presenting itself as a unified nation, functions under a complex federal system granting significant autonomy to its individual states. While this division of power aims to cultivate local governance and tailored responsiveness, it paradoxically results in a fragmented and often unjust assortment of laws across the country. This section will explore the numerous disparities arising from state-level legal variations, spotlighting the inequities and challenges these inconsistencies present to citizens navigating a nation that, in practice, is far from uniform. We must eliminate state laws, county laws, municipal laws, and even homeowner association regulations.

The federal minimum wage of \$7.25 presents a uniform baseline, but numerous states have chosen to establish minimum wages at about \$15, leading to income disparities for low-wage workers across the country. Within the realm of reproductive rights, states exhibit extreme divergence. While some states, like California and New York, actively protect abortion access, others, such as Texas and Alabama, enforce near-total bans. In the sphere of cannabis legalization, a similar patchwork exists, with states like Colorado and Washington embracing recreational use while others maintain strict criminalization. Gun control laws, too, reveal vast differences, ranging from states with comprehensive regulations to those with permissive approaches.

Property tax laws also vary widely, influencing the financial burden on homeowners and the funding of local services. Inheritance tax regulations differ significantly, affecting the transfer of wealth and potentially incentivizing migration based on tax implications. Corporate tax rates also contribute to the uneven economic landscape, with some states offering more business-friendly environments than others. Vehicle registration fees, often overlooked, can also vary substantially between states, adding to the cost of vehicle ownership depending on the state.

Beyond these prominent examples, a host of other state-level legal variations contribute to the nation's complex legal mosaic. These include differences in payday lending regulations, which govern the terms and conditions of short-term, high-interest loans. Rent control laws, designed to stabilize housing costs, are implemented differently or not at all, leading to varied housing affordability across the country. Regulations for ride-sharing services, such as Uber and Lyft, also differ, affecting the availability and safety of these transportation options. Alcohol sales regulations, including restrictions on Sunday sales and the legal drinking age, showcase cultural and historical differences between states.

Furthermore, the protection of consumer data varies considerably, with some states enacting comprehensive privacy laws while others lag behind. Consumer protection laws, designed to prevent deceptive and unfair business practices, also differ, affecting the recourse available to individuals who have been harmed. Gambling regulations, ranging from outright prohibitions to legal sports betting frameworks, reflect differing moral and economic considerations. Education standards, while guided by federal mandates, are ultimately determined at the state level, leading to variations in curriculum and student achievement. Sentencing guidelines, intended to ensure fair and consistent punishment for crimes, also vary significantly, contributing to disparities in incarceration rates and justice outcomes.

Even the application of eminent domain, the power of the government to take private property for public use, is subject to state-level variations, raising concerns about property rights and economic development. Renewable energy standards, designed to promote clean energy sources, also differ, affecting the pace and direction of the nation's transition to a sustainable energy future. Laws regarding transgender rights, particularly access to gender-affirming care and protections against discrimination, have become increasingly politicized, with stark contrasts between states offering comprehensive protections and those enacting restrictive measures. Finally, voting rights and access to the ballot box are also subject to state-level regulations, leading to disparities in voter turnout and representation. Corporate tax laws, state environmental regulations, state labor laws and union rights, and laws regarding the death penalty are all subject to variations among states.

The United States, despite its commitment to equality and justice, is marked by extensive variations in state laws. This legal fragmentation creates a system in which rights, opportunities, and economic well-being are often determined by geographical location rather than inherent worth or merit. While federalism has its strengths, the acute disparities across a range of essential aspects of life necessitate a critical reevaluation of the balance between state and federal authority. A more standardized approach to fundamental rights and regulations would not only enhance fairness and equity but also cultivate a stronger sense of national cohesion and purpose. Only by addressing these inconsistencies can the United States truly fulfill its promise of liberty and justice for all. Let's explore marijuana, traffic, and voting laws in more detail.

Marijuana laws in the United States present a complex and varied landscape, characterized not only by differing legality statuses but also by diverse classifications and regulations adopted by each state. This intricate patchwork of policies reflects the varying degrees to which states have embraced or resisted marijuana legalization, resulting in a complex system with significant implications for individuals, businesses, and law enforcement. As of 2024, the legal status of marijuana ranges from fully illegal to fully legal for both medical and recreational use; however, even within these broad categories, states differ widely in their approaches to possession limits, THC content, licensing, and expungement. Understanding these diverse state laws necessitates a detailed examination of the specific classifications and regulations in place, along with the underlying rationale and potential consequences of each approach.

In states where marijuana remains fully illegal, the classification is straightforward: cannabis is treated as a controlled substance with no legal avenues for

possession, sale, or use. As of 2024, several states still maintain full prohibition. In these jurisdictions, marijuana is typically classified as a Schedule I controlled substance, aligning with the federal classification, though the specific penalties vary. This classification implies that marijuana has a high potential for abuse and no accepted medical use, leading to strict penalties for possession, cultivation, and distribution. Penalties can include jail or prison time and significant fines, varying based on the amount possessed and prior convictions. These states often maintain a zero-tolerance policy, with limited exceptions for low-THC CBD products in some cases. The rationale behind these strict classifications often stems from concerns about public health, safety, and potential societal costs associated with marijuana use.

States with medical marijuana programs introduce a more nuanced classification system, differentiating between patients with qualifying medical conditions and those without. As of 2024, a significant number of states have comprehensive medical marijuana programs. In these states, patients with a physician's recommendation can access marijuana for specific medical conditions, such as chronic pain, cancer, and epilepsy. However, the specific qualifying conditions vary from state to state, as do the regulations surrounding patient registration, possession limits, and the types of cannabis products available. Some states may allow patients to cultivate their own cannabis, while others require them to purchase it from licensed dispensaries. The classification of medical marijuana also extends to the types of products available, with some states restricting access to specific forms, such as oils or edibles, while others allow for a broader range of options. These variations reflect the ongoing debate about the appropriate scope and regulation of medical marijuana programs.

Decriminalization represents a middle ground between prohibition and legalization, where possession of small amounts of marijuana is treated as a minor offense, similar to a traffic ticket, rather than a criminal act. States that have decriminalized marijuana typically classify possession of small amounts as a civil infraction, punishable by a fine but without the threat of jail time or a criminal record. However, the specific amount of marijuana that qualifies for decriminalization varies from state to state, as do the penalties for exceeding that limit. The classification of marijuana in these states reflects a recognition that the harms associated with minor possession offenses do not warrant the imposition of criminal sanctions. However, decriminalization does not legalize marijuana, and possession of larger amounts or involvement in the sale or distribution of cannabis remains subject to criminal penalties.

States that have legalized recreational marijuana have the most complex classification systems, encompassing regulations related to possession limits, home cultivation, retail sales, and taxation. As of 2024, over twenty states and the District of Columbia have legalized recreational marijuana for adults over 21. In these states, adults can legally purchase and possess marijuana, subject to certain restrictions. However, the specific regulations vary widely. Possession limits range, and some states allow home cultivation, while others prohibit it. Retail sales are typically regulated through a licensing system, with dispensaries subject to state and local taxes. The classification of marijuana in these states also extends to the types of products available, with regulations on THC content, labeling requirements, and restrictions on certain forms, such as edibles. These variations reflect the ongoing experimentation with different models of marijuana regulation and the challenges of balancing competing interests. Some states also offer automatic expungement for certain marijuana-related convictions.

The diverse classifications of marijuana across the United States highlight the complex and evolving nature of cannabis policy. From full prohibition to regulated recreational markets, each state has adopted its own approach to classifying and regulating marijuana, reflecting differing public opinions, economic considerations, and political ideologies. Understanding these diverse state laws requires a detailed examination of the specific regulations in place, as well as the underlying rationale and potential consequences of each approach. As more states consider marijuana policy reform, the need for comprehensive and evidence-based approaches becomes increasingly evident. By learning from the experiences of other states and tailoring regulations to their unique circumstances, policymakers can strive to create a system that promotes responsible regulation, addresses social inequities, and harnesses the potential benefits of this evolving industry.

Next, let's discuss variations in voting regulations between different states. The United States Constitution establishes a baseline for federal elections, but the administration of elections, including voter registration, identification requirements, and voting methods, is largely governed by state laws. This has resulted in significant variations in voting access and regulations across the 50 states. These differences can impact voter turnout, influence election outcomes, and raise questions about equal access to the ballot box.

States differ significantly in their voter registration requirements, impacting who can vote and how easily they can do so. For example, the age at which individuals can

pre-register to vote varies, with some states allowing 16-year-olds to pre-register. In contrast, other states have shorter pre-registration periods, often allowing registration only during the senior year of high school. The specific age to register to vote varies by state. States also have varying deadlines for voter registration before an election. Furthermore, the acceptable forms of identification for registering to vote differ by state. Some states require a driver's license or DMV-issued ID for online registration, while others allow citizens to register by mail without such identification. In Michigan, to register to vote, one must be a U.S. citizen, be 17.5 years old at the time of registration, be a resident of Michigan and at least a 30 day resident of your city or township by Election Day, and not be confined in a jail after being convicted and sentenced.

States also offer different avenues for voter registration. Alabama provides voter registration services at various state and local government offices, including driver's licensing offices, public libraries, and Departments of Human Resources. In California, individuals can register to vote online, by mail, or through same-day voter registration at county elections offices. Mississippi allows voter registration at the Circuit Clerk's office, the Municipal Clerk's office, the Department of Public Safety when obtaining a driver's license, or by mailing a voter registration form. These diverse registration methods reflect differing state approaches to encouraging voter participation.

Voter identification laws are another area of significant variation among states. As of November 2024, 35 states had laws requesting or requiring voters to show some form of identification at the polls. Within these states, 23 require photo identification, while 12 accept non-photo identification. The specific types of accepted identification also vary widely. In Alabama, acceptable forms of photo ID include a valid Alabama driver's license, a valid photo voter ID card, or other valid photo ID issued by the state or federal government. Arizona, while requiring identification, allows voters to present a valid Arizona driver's license, a valid Arizona non-driver identification, or a tribal enrollment card. Some states, like Florida, require both photo and signature identification.

The stringency of voter ID laws has been a subject of ongoing debate, with proponents arguing that they prevent voter fraud and opponents contending that they disproportionately disenfranchise minority and low-income voters. Many states offer provisional ballots to voters who cannot present the required identification, allowing them to vote with the condition that they provide identification within a specified timeframe.

Early voting and absentee voting options also differ significantly by state, offering varying degrees of flexibility and convenience for voters. As of August 2024, 47 states and the District of Columbia offer early in-person voting to all voters. However, the length of the early voting period varies considerably. Some states, like Georgia, begin early voting as early as the fourth Monday prior to an election. Other states, like New York, start early voting only ten days before the election. Early voting locations and hours also vary.

Absentee voting rules also vary widely. Some states, like California and Colorado, automatically mail ballots to all registered voters. Other states require voters to request an absentee ballot and may require a valid excuse for voting absentee. Acceptable excuses can include absence from the county, illness, disability, or religious observance. The deadlines for requesting and returning absentee ballots also vary by state. Some states allow voters to drop off absentee ballots in person at designated locations, while others require them to be mailed.

State laws also govern the qualifications, roles, and protections of poll workers, who are essential to the administration of elections. Poll worker qualifications, appointment processes, and training requirements vary by state. In California, poll workers must be U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents, and eligible high school students can also serve as poll workers. State employees in California are allowed to take time off to serve as poll workers. The duties of poll workers typically include setting up polling places, assisting voters, protecting ballots, and ensuring the integrity of the voting process. Given increasing concerns about threats and harassment, some states have enacted laws to protect election officials, staff, and poll workers.

State laws also establish the procedures for redistricting, the redrawing of electoral district boundaries based on population changes after each decennial census. In most states, the state legislature has primary control over the redistricting process. However, some states utilize independent commissions to draw district lines, aiming to reduce partisan influence. The criteria used in redistricting also vary by state, with common considerations including equal population, contiguity, compactness, and communities of interest. Some states also regulate partisan outcomes in the redistricting process, prohibiting the undue favoring or disfavoring of a political party. With the Voting Rights Act being weakened on the federal level, many states are attempting to pass their own versions to combat the attacks on voting rights.

The varying state laws governing voting have significant implications for voter access, election administration, and political representation. These differences reflect

diverse state priorities and approaches to balancing voter participation, election security, and fairness. Understanding these state-level variations is crucial for voters, policymakers, and anyone interested in ensuring a fair and accessible democratic process.

The legal landscape of the United States is complex, with laws often varying significantly from state to state. Two critical areas where these differences are particularly evident are the age of majority and the age of consent. These laws define the boundaries of adulthood and the capacity to make informed decisions, especially concerning personal autonomy and sexual activity. Understanding these variations is crucial for both legal awareness and ensuring the protection of young individuals.

The age of majority is the age at which an individual is legally recognized as an adult, granting them the rights and responsibilities that come with adulthood. These rights typically include the ability to vote, sign contracts, join the military, and make independent decisions regarding their own affairs. While most states in the U.S. have set the age of majority at 18, there are notable exceptions. Alabama and Nebraska, for instance, recognize the age of majority as 19, while Mississippi sets it at 21. These differences reflect varying perspectives on when an individual is deemed capable of handling adult responsibilities.

The age of majority also impacts custodial accounts, such as Uniform Transfers to Minors Act (UTMA) accounts. While the standard age of majority might be 18, many states extend the age at which a minor gains control of these accounts to 21. For example, while the age of majority in California is 18, the UTMA account age of majority is also 18 unless the trust is specifically titled to delay the transfer until age 25. In contrast, states like Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and others set the UTMA account age of majority at 21. Furthermore, some states, including Alaska, Arkansas, California, the District of Columbia, Florida, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming, allow the transferor to specify a later age, up to 21, 25 or even 30 in Wyoming when establishing the account. These variations underscore the nuanced approach states take in balancing the rights of young adults with the need for continued protection and financial management.

The age of consent is the minimum age at which an individual is legally permitted to consent to sexual activity. This age varies across states, typically ranging from 16 to 18 years old. The purpose of these laws is to protect minors from sexual exploitation and abuse, acknowledging that they may lack the maturity to make

informed decisions about sexual activity. In the majority of states (34), the age of consent is 16 years of age. States such as Florida, Utah, Idaho, California, Delaware, Illinois, North Dakota, Oregon, Virginia, and Wisconsin set the age of consent at 18. New York, Louisiana, and Colorado are among the few states to set the age of consent at 17. Other states, including Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, and West Virginia, define the age of consent as 16.

Complicating matters further, some states have "Romeo and Juliet" laws, which provide exceptions to statutory rape laws when there is a close age difference between the partners. For instance, Texas law stipulates that if the age difference between individuals engaging in consensual sexual intercourse is no more than three years, the older individual will not be charged with statutory rape, provided they are over 17. Additionally, some states consider the age difference between the individuals involved. For example, in Maryland, an individual can be convicted if the victim is under 16 and there is a four-year age difference between the victim and the other individual. These nuances reflect the ongoing debate about balancing the protection of minors with recognizing the realities of teenage relationships.

The varying state laws regarding the age of majority and the age of consent highlight the diverse approaches taken across the United States in defining adulthood and regulating sexual activity. While the age of majority grants legal rights and responsibilities, the age of consent aims to protect young individuals from exploitation. These laws are not static; they continue to evolve in response to changing societal norms and legal interpretations. Therefore, understanding these differences is essential for navigating the legal landscape and ensuring the well-being of young people across different states.

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The implementation of hands-free device laws across various states has emerged as a crucial response to the rising incidences of distracted driving. With the advent of smartphones and other mobile technology, the potential for distraction while driving has proliferated dramatically, prompting legislative measures aimed at mitigating risks associated with mobile phone usage behind the wheel. This section delves into the nuances of hands-free device laws, their efficacy in enhancing road safety, and the implications of differing regulations among states.

Hands-free laws generally prohibit drivers from holding or manipulating handheld mobile devices while operating a vehicle. The goal of these laws is to encourage the use of hands-free technologies—such as Bluetooth devices, voice commands, and steering wheel-integrated systems—that allow drivers to maintain focus on the road while still being able to communicate. Importantly, while hands-free operation minimizes physical manipulation of devices, it does not necessarily eliminate cognitive distractions associated with phone conversations.

Different states have adopted varying approaches to these laws. For instance, Georgia's Hands-Free Georgia Act, which took effect on July 1, 2018, strictly prohibits drivers from holding or manually operating a phone while driving. The law specifies that drivers can only use phones through hands-free technologies—such as speakerphone or Bluetooth—allowing for seamless communication without diverting physical attention from the road. In contrast, states like California have embraced similar restrictions but have also included provisions that allow for certain limited interactions with handheld devices, leading to varied interpretations of what constitutes legal behavior while driving and complicating enforcement.

The enforcement and specifics of hands-free laws vary considerably among states, impacting driver behavior broadly. For example, New Hampshire does not

impose any restrictions on adult drivers regarding the use of mobile devices, relying instead on public awareness campaigns to highlight the dangers of distracted driving. In contrast, other states impose strict penalties for violations, incentivizing compliance; Virginia, for instance, issues fines of up to \$125 for violations, urging drivers to adopt safer behaviors to avoid penalties.

Moreover, the disparities in laws can lead to confusion for motorists traveling across state lines. Drivers may find themselves unsure of what is permissible in another state's legislation, complicating road safety efforts. The resultant inconsistency showcases the need for unified laws to ease compliance and enhance safety across jurisdictions.

In conclusion, hands-free device laws represent a significant effort to improve road safety amid the pervasive issue of distracted driving. While these regulations have shown some effectiveness in reducing physical distractions and improving driver focus, cognitive distractions persist, warranting further scrutiny and potential legislative enhancement. As states continue to evolve their traffic laws, a concerted effort is needed to establish a more coherent framework that standardizes regulations regarding mobile device use while driving. By emphasizing hands-free compliance and addressing cognitive distractions, states can strive toward a safer driving environment for all road users.

The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees that individuals in similar circumstances are treated equally under the law. This essential right has profound implications for how states implement residency laws, which are often designed to regulate access to various privileges and benefits. While many discussions center around issues of race or gender discrimination, the intersecting fields of equal protection, residency requirements, and geographic disparities present equally significant challenges in judicial contexts. This section will explore ten landmark cases that illustrate the application of equal protection principles in residency law disputes, with an emphasis on decisions that do not primarily revolve around welfare.

One of the foundational cases addressing residency laws is *Shapiro v. Thompson*, where the Supreme Court struck down a Connecticut law requiring one-year residency before individuals could access welfare benefits. This case established the precedent that residency requirements could not violate the Equal Protection Clause by penalizing individuals for exercising their constitutional right to migrate freely within the country.

In *Dunn v. Blumstein*, the Supreme Court addressed Tennessee's law that conditioned voting rights on a one-year residency requirement. The Court ruled that this practice created an unfair classification, denying equal protection to individuals moving to the state. This decision reinforced the principle that voting rights must be accessible to all residents, regardless of how long they have lived in a state.

In *Graham v. Richardson*, the Supreme Court invalidated state laws in Arizona and Pennsylvania that denied welfare benefits to resident aliens. The Court held that such statutes created distinctions based solely on alienage and residency, thus violating the Equal Protection Clause. This case highlighted the unconstitutionality of imposing stricter residency requirements to access benefits based on citizenship status.

Vlandis v. Kline involved a Connecticut statute that imposed a presumption of non-residency on students who had not resided in the state for at least one year. The Supreme Court held that this presumption violated the Equal Protection Clause by treating individuals differently based on their state residency duration.

In *Zobel v. Williams*, the Supreme Court assessed an Alaska law that distributed oil revenue dividends based on the length of a resident's time in the state, disproportionately affecting newcomers. The Court ruled this created an invidious classification that stymied the right to travel, emphasizing that states cannot discriminate among their residents based solely on residency duration.

In *Reynolds v. Sims*, the Court ruled that Alabama's legislative districts must be apportioned based on population, emphasizing the "one person, one vote" principle. This ruling affirmed that legislative representation must consider equal protection for all citizens and was foundational for addressing geographic disparities where residents could be systematically underrepresented in state legislatures.

In *Saenz v. Roe*, the Court addressed a California statute that provided lower welfare benefits to new residents for their first year in the state. The Supreme Court found that this law violated the Equal Protection Clause by creating a classification based on residency duration, affirming that newly arrived citizens must be treated equally to long-term residents.

In *Takahashi v. Fish & Game Commission*, the Supreme Court struck down a California law restricting fishing licenses to U.S. citizens while denying them to resident aliens. This case reflected the Court's view that residency classifications must maintain equal protection standards, irrespective of the differing status of citizenship and legality.

In *Cabell v. Chavez-Salido*, the Supreme Court upheld California's law requiring peace officers to be U.S. citizens. The Court found that citizenship was essential for roles involving law enforcement, as these positions exercise significant authority, thereby justifying the state's interest in limiting these roles to citizens while not infringing on the principles of equal protection for most jobs.

In the significant case of *Plyler v. Doe*, the Supreme Court ruled that a Texas law denying public education to children of undocumented immigrants violated the Equal Protection Clause. The Court held that the law infringed upon a fundamental right and negatively impacted vulnerable children without a compelling state interest. While this case primarily deals with education, it reinforces the importance of equal access to opportunities irrespective of geographic entry and legal residency status.

In summary, the evolving case law surrounding residency requirements and geographic disparities within the context of the Equal Protection Clause emphasizes the careful balance between state interests and individual rights. The Supreme Court has consistently addressed these issues, employing strict scrutiny for classifications based on residency duration, alienage, and geographic differences. Laws that create unjust classifications undermine the notion of equal protection and hinder the exercise of rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

As residency laws continue to determine access to public benefits, professional opportunities, and educational resources, it remains critical for state legislatures to uphold principles of fairness and equality in their policies. A commitment to equitable treatment ensures that individuals across various geographic and residency statuses receive the protections intended by the Equal Protection Clause. The resulting legal framework serves as a foundation for maintaining a just society and reinforcing the rights of all citizens within the U.S. legal landscape.

Overall, in the discourse surrounding the reformation of the legal landscape in the United States, the proposition of eliminating state, county, city, and homeowner association (HOA) laws to establish a universal federal law demands immediate implementation. This transformative approach is not merely a theoretical exercise; it addresses the fundamental issues plaguing our legal system—disparate laws across jurisdictions that create confusion, inefficiencies, and a patchwork of inequities that ultimately undermine the very principles of justice and equality that our nation strives to uphold.

Firstly, the inconsistencies inherent in state and local laws serve to confound citizens and businesses alike. Navigating a myriad of regulations, often contradictory

and incomprehensible, imposes unnecessary burdens. A universal federal law would create a streamlined legal framework where all individuals and businesses adhere to the same set of rules, mitigating the compliance costs that currently stifle economic growth and innovation. By eradicating these barriers, we would not only facilitate interstate commerce but also foster a more coherent and unified national economy, one where individuals can conduct their affairs without the fear of inadvertently violating a law they may not even be aware of due to its variance from state to state.

Moreover, a uniform legal structure promises to deliver equitable protections for rights and freedoms. Currently, individuals across different states experience varying degrees of legal protection, often dictated by local political dynamics rather than universal standards. This inconsistency is particularly egregious when it comes to issues such as voting rights, civil liberties, and consumer protections. The adoption of a comprehensive federal law would enshrine a baseline standard of rights that reflects our shared values as a nation, ensuring that every citizen, regardless of geographic location, is afforded the same fundamental protections. Such uniformity is vital in preserving the integrity of our democratic processes, enabling equitable participation for all.

While it is essential to acknowledge the concerns surrounding federal overreach and the potential erosion of state sovereignty, it is equally crucial to recognize the imperative for federal intervention in achieving true equality under the law. Our understanding of federalism must evolve to reflect the realities of a mobilized and interconnected society where local autonomy exists alongside national standards that ensure justice and fairness for every citizen. Rather than viewing federal legislation as an infringement upon state rights, we should consider it a necessary framework for enhancing state capabilities—enabling them to innovate within a structured and fair environment rather than compete in a race to the bottom.

The current patchwork of laws, especially in relation to HOAs, illustrates the need for such reform. The often-arbitrary nature of HOA regulations stifles individual property rights and creates potential venues for discrimination and unequal application of rules. By establishing clear federal standards governing homeowner associations, we can prevent instances of overreach that undermine individual rights while allowing for the maintenance of community standards through reasonable measures.

In conclusion, the call for immediate implementation of a universal federal law is not merely an argument for the consolidation of power but a profound necessity for the advancement of a just and equitable society. Through the establishment of a singular legal framework, we would not only streamline administrative processes and reduce the

burden of compliance but also elevate the ethical standards of governance by ensuring that all citizens are treated with dignity and respect. As we confront the myriad challenges of modern society, embracing this transformative vision offers a path toward greater unity, accountability, and a reaffirmation of our democratic ideals—where justice is not dictated by geographic boundaries but grounded in the fundamental rights shared by all Americans. The time has come to rethink the fabric of our legal system and to commit to a future where equity prevails over complexity, and every citizen can confidently assert their rights under the same laws that safeguard our collective liberty.

II. A Jury of Educated Judges is Common Sense

Alexander Hamilton once said, "The voice of the people has been mistaken for the voice of God; but the jury is made of people and not of gods." The adjudication of justice is a fundamental aspect of any society governed by the rule of law. Traditional jury trials in many legal systems, notably in the United States, rely on a panel of everyday citizens to determine the outcome of cases. However, as society evolves and legal complexities increase, the efficacy of using randomly selected, mostly legally uneducated citizens as jurors has come into question. Personally, I have found having traditional juries composed of ordinary people to be bizarre throughout human history. A jury of professionally trained judges should replace juries of untrained citizens to enhance the quality of justice, increase efficiency in legal proceedings, and uphold public confidence in the judicial system.

At the core of the argument for professional juries is the undeniable limitation of laypersons in comprehending intricate legal matters. Juries, composed of average citizens, often bring a variety of biases and preconceived notions into the deliberation room, posing significant risks to the fairness of trials. Evidence shows that jurors sometimes struggle to grasp complex legal principles, leading to verdicts influenced more by emotive testimony rather than factual and legal rigor. As noted in various studies, jurors may have difficulty understanding judicial instructions, complicated evidence, and the nuances of the law, resulting in inconsistencies in verdicts that can contribute to miscarriages of justice.

Moreover, cognitive biases inherent in the decision-making process can skew verdicts. Research indicates that jurors can be influenced by factors such as pre-trial

media coverage, emotional appeals, and even the racial, social, or economic backgrounds of defendants and plaintiffs, which contradicts the ideal of impartiality expected in a jury trial. For instance, a juror who has been exposed to extensive media coverage may harbor biases which affect their judgment.

Judges, on the other hand, are trained legal professionals who spend years studying the law, participating in trials, and acquiring judicial experience. They are capable of dissecting complex legal frameworks and applying them to the cases presented before them expertly. This expertise can result in more reasoned, logical, and law-abiding decisions. As the legal landscape becomes increasingly complex—with technology, international law, and socio-political factors influencing cases—a lay jury's ability to provide appropriate verdicts can be severely compromised.

Furthermore, judges possess an understanding of legal precedents and principles that jurors lack. The reliance on established laws and guidelines can enhance consistency in verdicts across similar cases. Unlike jurors who may apply personal experiences or societal norms to their decision-making, judges are trained to uphold legal standards, thereby safeguarding the integrity of the rule of law.

As suggested in various analyses, transitioning to judge-only trials could provide a targeted approach to decision-making, wherein judges could apply their comprehensive legal understanding to arrive at fairer outcomes. The specialized judgment exercised by experienced judicial officers can significantly mitigate the risks of variability and biases inherent in jury trials.

In addition to enhancing judicial accuracy, judge-only trials can streamline the legal process. Jury trials are commonly recognized as time-consuming and resource-intensive, often taking considerably longer than bench trials. The process of jury selection alone can be protracted, with both sides engaging in careful vetting to ensure a suitable jury is empaneled. This lengthy process often leads to delays in court schedules, contributing to an overloaded judicial system. Comparatively, trials conducted solely by judges can be more efficient. They require significantly less time to reach resolutions, which can help alleviate backlogs in courts.

Furthermore, economic analyses reveal that jury trials often incur higher costs than judge trials due to lengthy deliberations, juror payments, and the costs associated with jury selection procedures. These financial burdens ultimately fall on the judicial system and taxpayers. Utilizing professional judges could reduce the expenses associated with jury trials and allow for more effective allocation of judicial resources.

Public trust is a vital cornerstone of the justice system. When citizens feel that the judicial system is fair and operates without bias, they are more likely to have confidence in its outcomes. However, widespread skepticism regarding the ability of lay juries to deliver just verdicts—especially in high-profile or complex cases—can lead to disillusionment with the legal process. Ensuring that trials are presided over by experienced, impartial judges can bolster public trust and confidence in the legal system.

As discussed in several studies, the public perceives jury trials as fairer than judge-only trials; however, concerns arise when juries display a lack of understanding of complex legal principles or outright biases influenced by societal narratives. In cases where jurors may struggle to fully comprehend the evidence or underlying legal principles, the outcomes can seem arbitrary or unjust, undermining the system. On the contrary, relying on professional judges—who understand the expectations and requirements of the legal framework—can foster a perception of accountability and fairness in the delivery of justice, thereby enhancing public confidence.

While the move toward judge-only juries has its merits, it is essential to acknowledge that this shift alone may not completely resolve the challenges facing the judiciary. Judges themselves can also be subject to implicit biases and flawed decision-making processes. For example, research has shown that even well-trained judges may exhibit cognitive bias influenced by various factors, such as media coverage or societal sentiments regarding race or gender.

Thus, alongside instituting judge-only trials, comprehensive training programs on bias recognition and management should be designed for judges. Training should include practical strategies to counteract biases and uphold the principles of impartiality. It is vital for judges to periodically undergo training to refine their decision-making and awareness of biases—both their own and those potentially inherent in the system.

In conclusion, transitioning to juries of judges instead of laypersons presents a compelling solution to numerous challenges facing the current legal system. Considering the complexities of modern cases, experienced judges possess the requisite knowledge, objectivity, and legal expertise to ensure just outcomes. The prospective efficiencies gained from judge-only trials, alongside increased public trust in an impartial legal system, highlight the necessity of assessing and reforming our approach to jury trials. As injustices continue to arise in the criminal justice system due to the flaws in the jury process, embracing a jury of judges can promote fairness and preserve

the integrity that is essential in upholding the rule of law in contemporary society. As John Adams famously stated, "Representative government and trial by jury are the heart and lungs of liberty." Transitioning to judge-only trials can become a crucial part of ensuring that liberty is maintained in an ever-evolving legal landscape.

III. Getting Real about Representation

"Wealth, not culpability, shapes outcomes," concluded Bryan Stevenson. The principle of equality before the law is foundational to the justice system in democratic societies. However, in reality, this ideal often fails to translate into practice, primarily due to the disparities in legal representation. One critical aspect of this inequality is the economic divide in access to legal services, particularly the fact that paid lawyers can create an undue advantage for their clients over those represented by public defenders or those who represent themselves. This section examines the detrimental effects of paid legal representation on fairness in the judicial system and argues that the inequities stemming from such disparities undermine the very concept of justice.

To understand why paid lawyers create an unfair advantage, it is essential to recognize the role that economic inequality plays in accessing legal representation. In the United States, for instance, a significant portion of citizens struggle to afford legal help. According to the Legal Services Corporation, as of 2022, low-income Americans did not receive satisfactory assistance for 92% of their legal problems. The high costs associated with hiring private lawyers place them out of reach for many, creating a systemic inequality where only those with substantial financial resources can secure competent legal representation. Consequently, this imbalance directly influences case outcomes, fostering a justice gap that disproportionately impacts low-income individuals and marginalized communities.

Research consistently shows that wealthier clients tend to achieve more favorable outcomes in legal matters compared to their less affluent counterparts. A study indicated that representation by a public defender reduced the likelihood of a guilty charge by 19% and resulted in significantly harsher penalties for those without such representation. This stark contrast highlights how the financial capacity to hire skilled attorneys not only facilitates better negotiation of plea deals but also ensures a more robust defense in court.

The wealth gap in legal representation perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage. Wealthier defendants can afford attorneys with specialized expertise, superior resources, and time to dedicate to their cases. In contrast, public defenders, who are often overburdened with caseloads exceeding national standards, struggle to provide adequate representation. This disparity means that outcomes are less reflective of the evidence presented and more reflective of the defendant's ability to pay for legal help, violating the ideal of equitable treatment under the law.

The landmark Supreme Court case *Gideon v. Wainwright* affirmed a defendant's right to legal counsel at the state's expense, emphasizing that such access is vital to a fair trial. However, this right is predominantly extended to criminal cases and does not apply to civil cases. In civil matters, individuals often face dire consequences without legal representation, including evictions, loss of parental rights, and other life-altering situations without the benefit of counsel. The absence of a right to counsel creates a system where wealthier individuals can navigate the complexities of legal proceedings more effectively than impoverished counterparts, further deepening the justice gap and exacerbating socioeconomic disparities.

Furthermore, the dynamics of public defenders in many jurisdictions are also problematic. Defenders often find themselves in a position where they are compelled to accept plea deals that they are certain are not in the best interests of their clients because they lack the resources to contend with stronger opposing counsel. As a consequence, the integrity of the justice system is at risk when defense attorneys are forced to prioritize efficiency over thorough representation due to constraints imposed by the legal infrastructure.

The negative implications of the wealth-based disparity in legal representation extend beyond individual cases into the broader implications for societal welfare. When wealth is a determining factor in the representation quality, systemic bias can permeate the judicial system. The unequal treatment of legal cases not only results in wrongful convictions but also establishes patterns that reinforce social hierarchies. Those without financial resources are less likely to have their voices heard in legal matters, effectively silencing entire populations and perpetuating a cycle of disenfranchisement that also carries an emotional and psychological toll on marginalized communities.

Racial and economic biases in the legal system are well-documented. Studies show that individuals from lower-income backgrounds, particularly those from minority communities, suffer disproportionately from the effects of being underrepresented or inadequately represented in legal proceedings. The intersection of poverty and racial

injustice creates a compounding effect where the most vulnerable are subjected to harsher penalties, driving further wedges of inequality into the already fractured justice system.

The ethical obligation of lawyers to provide equitable access to legal representation is crucial to the profession's integrity. Many attorneys engage in pro bono work, offering their services to those who cannot afford to pay. While pro bono efforts are commendable, they cannot substitute for the systemic changes required to rectify the inequalities dished out by the current system.

Research indicates that defendants working with pro bono attorneys are more likely to receive favorable outcomes compared to those representing themselves or relying solely on public defenders. However, the impact of pro bono services remains limited unless robust structures are put in place to ensure that everyone, regardless of economic strata, receives equal access to competent legal representation.

Pro bono work must be viewed as a starting point rather than a solution. Law firms and organizations should be encouraged to set mandatory pro bono requirements that would not only provide support to underserved populations but also cultivate a culture of service and ethical responsibility among young lawyers. As pro bono work penetrates the core of legal practice, it fosters a heightened consciousness around social justice, allowing the profession to use its unique position to advocate for those hunted by injustice.

The current state of legal representation in the United States emphasizes the urgent need for systemic reform. Policy initiatives must aim to ensure equitable access to legal services that are not contingent on an individual's wealth. This includes advocating for more comprehensive legal aid funding, adjustment of legal fees based on income through sliding scale fines for civil matters, and enhanced public defender systems that allow meaningful representation.

We must aim to include legal representation as a fundamental right across both criminal and civil matters. Policies ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their economic background, can access quality legal assistance regardless of the nature of their legal issues must be promoted. Adopting these measures would begin to bridge the significant justice gap and foster a more equitable society, eroding the unfair advantages that paid lawyers confer upon their clientele.

In summation, the existence of paid lawyers creates a pronounced imbalance in the justice system, favoring those who can afford such representation. This economic disparity does not merely result in unequal treatment; it actively undermines the

principles of fairness and justice that underpin modern legal systems. Therefore, it is imperative to advocate for reforms that ensure equal access to competent legal representation, regardless of income levels.

By prioritizing systemic changes to challenge the status quo, society can stride toward rectifying the disparities created by wealth in legal representation, thereby reinstituting a more equitable and just legal framework. The time for transformative change is now; the fight for fairness in legal representation is integral to the larger quest for a just society.

IV. Ending the Stone Age

Jesus said, “He without sin cast the first stone”. Let’s address the death penalty. The death penalty, also known as capital punishment, is a contentious issue that has been debated for centuries. While some argue that it is a just punishment for heinous crimes, others contend that it is a cruel and unusual punishment that violates fundamental human rights. Many Americans believe that the death penalty should be illegal due to its inherent violation of human rights, its discriminatory application, the risk of executing innocent individuals, and its ineffectiveness as a deterrent to crime. Furthermore, the section will explore the rationale behind the abolition of the death penalty in various countries, highlighting the global trend towards recognizing the inherent dignity and right to life of all individuals.

The death penalty is a violation of the most fundamental human right: the right to life. This right is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. By imposing the death penalty, the state denies an individual the opportunity to live and experience life, regardless of the severity of their crime. Moreover, the death penalty constitutes cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment, which is also prohibited under international human rights law. The physical and psychological suffering inflicted on death row inmates, who often spend years awaiting execution, is a form of torture. The "death row phenomenon," characterized by prolonged solitary confinement, anxiety, and uncertainty, inflicts severe mental and physical trauma, further solidifying the argument that capital punishment is a form of torture. Even the methods of execution, such as lethal injection, electrocution, and hanging, can inflict unnecessary pain and suffering, violating the

inherent dignity of the human person. The safeguards that human rights organizations have advocated for mitigating the cruelty of execution methods advocate for methods that inflict the "minimum possible suffering". Some methods, such as gas asphyxiation and stoning, have been singled out as particularly inhumane.

The death penalty is often used within skewed justice systems, where individuals are convicted after grossly unfair trials, based on torture-tainted evidence, and with inadequate legal representation. In some countries, death sentences are imposed as the mandatory punishment for certain offenses, meaning that judges are not able to consider the circumstances of the crime or of the defendant before sentencing. Moreover, the death penalty is frequently used as a political tool to punish political opponents or quell dissent. The risk of executing innocent people is an unavoidable consequence of the death penalty. Since criminal legal systems are not foolproof, wrongful convictions occur due to inadequate legal representation, faulty evidence, discrimination, and eyewitness misidentification. The death penalty alone imposes an irrevocable sentence, and once an inmate is executed, nothing can be done to make amends if a mistake has been made. The high rate of error in capital trials further underscores the unreliability of the death penalty system.

The death penalty is applied unfairly and disproportionately affects marginalized groups, including the poor, racial minorities, and those with mental disabilities. These groups often lack adequate legal representation and face systemic biases within the criminal justice system. Studies have consistently shown that a death sentence is far more likely when the victim is white than when the victim is Black. This disparity highlights the racial bias that permeates the application of the death penalty, devaluing the lives of Black victims and perpetuating a system of racial injustice. The intersection of race and socio-economic status further exacerbates this discrimination, as those with less advantaged backgrounds or belonging to a racial, ethnic, or religious minority often have limited access to legal representation and face greater disadvantage in their experience of the criminal justice system.

The death penalty has always been, and continues to be, disproportionately wielded against Black people and other people of color. The disparities in the makeup of the death row population are clear: Black and Hispanic people represent 31% of the U.S. population, but 53% of death row inmates. The death row population is over 41% Black, even though Black people make up about 13% of the U.S. population. Factors other than the crime itself or the offender's culpability affect prosecutors' decisions to pursue capital convictions and juries' decisions to sentence individuals to death. Arbitrary

influences such as where the trial is held and the offender's race may lead to dramatic differences in the outcome of a capital trial.

The claim that the death penalty deters crime has been repeatedly discredited. There is no evidence that the death penalty is any more effective in reducing crime than life imprisonment. Countries and states that have abolished the death penalty have not experienced a significant increase in crime rates. In fact, some studies suggest that states without the death penalty have lower murder rates than states that do. The states that do not employ the death penalty generally have lower murder rates than states that do. Also, the U.S., with the death penalty, has a higher murder rate than the countries of Europe or Canada, which do not use the death penalty.

The majority of people who commit murders either do not expect to be caught or do not carefully weigh the differences between a possible execution and life in prison before they act. Frequently, murders are committed in moments of passion or anger, or by criminals who are substance abusers and acted impulsively. As someone who presided over many of Texas's executions, former Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox has remarked, "It is my own experience that those executed in Texas were not deterred by the existence of the death penalty law". The death penalty is not a deterrent because most people who commit murders either do not expect to be caught or do not carefully weigh the differences between a possible execution and life in prison before they act. It has also been found that, after death penalty abolition, nations tend to see their murder rates decline.

Over two-thirds of the world's countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, recognizing its inherent cruelty and ineffectiveness. The global trend towards abolition reflects an evolving understanding of human rights and a commitment to upholding the dignity of all individuals. The death penalty is not used at all in 112 countries, compared with 48 in 1991. Numerous countries have abolished the death penalty, including Portugal, Denmark, Luxembourg, Nicaragua, Norway, France, Cape Verde, Netherlands, Australia, Haiti, Cambodia, New Zealand, Romania, Slovenia, Angola, Paraguay, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Poland, South Africa, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

These countries have abolished the death penalty for various reasons, including a belief in the sanctity of human life, the risk of executing innocent people, and the availability of more humane and effective alternatives. Some have also acknowledged that the death penalty is often applied in a discriminatory manner, disproportionately affecting the poor and marginalized. Abolitionist countries often cite international

human rights standards as a key rationale for their decision. For instance, many European countries have abolished the death penalty as a prerequisite for membership in the European Union, which views capital punishment as a violation of the right to life. These nations often point to the alternative of lengthy, or life-long incarceration as better ways to punish, while still allowing the chance that an imprisoned person is later found innocent. In Latin America, many nations abolished the death penalty during a wave of democratization and human rights reforms in the 1980s and 1990s. In Africa, countries like South Africa have abolished the death penalty, citing its incompatibility with the values of human dignity and equality.

The death penalty is an outdated and inhumane practice that has no place in a just and civilized society. Its inherent violation of human rights, discriminatory application, risk of executing innocent individuals, and ineffectiveness as a deterrent to crime make it an unacceptable form of punishment. The global trend towards abolition reflects a growing recognition of the inherent dignity and right to life of all individuals. By joining the ranks of abolitionist nations, the United States can align itself with international human rights standards and demonstrate a commitment to justice, equality, and the sanctity of human life. The death penalty should be illegal, replaced by more humane and effective alternatives that prioritize rehabilitation, restorative justice, and the protection of all members of society.

V. I'll See You This Lifetime

Let's discuss abolishing life sentencing. Angela Davis concluded, "Life sentences are a form of structural violence. They are an assault on the human spirit and the idea of redemption." She is more than right. She is divinely right. Life without parole has become an increasingly prevalent punishment in the United States. As of 2021, over 200,000 individuals, or one in seven prisoners in the United States, were serving life or virtual life sentences. 11 countries have abolished life sentencing entirely. While proponents argue for its necessity in certain egregious cases, a growing chorus of scholars and public policy advocates are calling for its abolition. They argue that life sentences are ineffective deterrents, do not meaningfully enhance community safety, are excessively cruel, and disproportionately affect marginalized communities.

Furthermore, the pursuit of retribution through life sentencing undermines the potential for rehabilitation and disregards fundamental principles of human dignity.

Critics of life sentencing often point to its ineffectiveness as a deterrent to crime. Deterrence theory suggests that the threat of severe punishment will dissuade individuals from engaging in criminal behavior. However, evidence indicates that life sentences do not significantly reduce crime rates. Many crimes, especially violent ones, are committed in the heat of passion, under the influence of substances, or by individuals with mental health issues, making them less susceptible to rational calculations about consequences. Moreover, studies have shown that long prison sentences do not necessarily improve public safety and can even increase reoffending rates. A 2021 meta-analysis of 116 studies found that custodial sentences do not prevent reoffending and can actually increase it. The prospect of spending decades in prison, or even dying there, may not be a sufficient deterrent for individuals who do not expect to be caught or who are driven by desperation or mental instability.

Furthermore, life sentences do not meaningfully enhance community safety beyond what shorter, more reasonable sentences could achieve. While incapacitation, the removal of offenders from society, does prevent them from committing crimes in the outside world, the effects of aging and the declining impact on crime as people age out of criminal behavior suggest that lengthy sentences are often unnecessary. As offenders grow older, their physical capabilities and propensity for violence tend to diminish. Therefore, keeping them incarcerated for life represents a significant expenditure of resources without a corresponding increase in public safety. Moreover, resources spent on maintaining life sentences could be better invested in community-based programs that address the root causes of crime, such as poverty, lack of education, and substance abuse. By focusing on prevention and rehabilitation, communities can achieve greater long-term safety and well-being than through the prolonged incarceration of offenders.

Life sentencing, especially LWOP, is inherently cruel and violates fundamental principles of human dignity. It denies individuals the possibility of rehabilitation, redemption, and reintegration into society. By condemning a person to die in prison, the justice system effectively abandons any hope for positive change and disregards the inherent worth and potential of every human being. Such sentences are particularly troubling when applied to juveniles, whose brains are still developing and who have a greater capacity for change. The Supreme Court has recognized this distinction, holding that mandatory LWOP sentences for juveniles are unconstitutional. However, the

imposition of LWOP on adults also raises serious ethical concerns. It constitutes a form of "death by incarceration," subjecting individuals to a slow and dehumanizing end.

The concept of human dignity is central to international human rights law. The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that life sentences without the possibility of review violate Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits inhuman and degrading treatment. The court emphasized that offenders have a right to hope for eventual release and that denying them this prospect undermines their inherent dignity. Similarly, the International Criminal Court calls for a review of sentences after 25 years, reflecting a global trend towards recognizing the importance of rehabilitation and the potential for change, even among those who have committed serious crimes. By clinging to life sentencing, the United States stands as an outlier among developed nations, demonstrating a disregard for international human rights norms and a commitment to punitive measures over restorative justice.

Life sentencing disproportionately affects marginalized communities, particularly racial and ethnic minorities. Studies have consistently shown that African Americans and Latinos are more likely to receive life sentences than their white counterparts, even when controlling for crime severity and prior criminal history. This disparity reflects systemic biases within the criminal justice system, including racial profiling, unequal access to legal representation, and harsher sentencing practices for minority defendants. The Sentencing Project reports that more than two-thirds of those serving life sentences are people of color, and one in five Black men in prison are serving a life sentence. For LWOP sentences specifically, 55% of individuals serving these sentences are Black.

The overrepresentation of minorities in the life-sentenced population perpetuates cycles of poverty, inequality, and social marginalization. When large segments of a community are removed from society and condemned to die in prison, it destabilizes families, weakens social networks, and undermines economic opportunities. This creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, where communities already struggling with poverty and lack of opportunity are further disadvantaged by the mass incarceration of their members, leading to increased crime rates and further entrenchment of racial disparities. Addressing this injustice requires not only abolishing life sentencing but also dismantling the systemic biases that permeate the criminal justice system and investing in community-based solutions that promote equity and opportunity.

The risk of wrongful conviction is an ever-present concern in the criminal justice system, and life sentencing exacerbates the potential for irreversible injustice. While the

legal system strives for accuracy, errors occur, and innocent individuals are sometimes convicted of crimes they did not commit. When a person is sentenced to life in prison, the consequences of a wrongful conviction are particularly devastating. They spend decades, or even their entire lives, behind bars for a crime they did not commit, robbed of their freedom, their families, and their futures. The Death Penalty Information Center notes that some inmates have come within hours of execution before evidence was uncovered proving their innocence.

Even if an exoneration eventually occurs, the years spent in prison can inflict irreparable psychological and emotional damage. The experience of wrongful imprisonment can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and a host of other mental health issues. Moreover, the stigma of being a convicted criminal can make it difficult to reintegrate into society, find employment, and rebuild relationships, even after being exonerated. Given the inherent fallibility of the justice system, abolishing life sentencing would reduce the risk of inflicting such profound and irreversible harm on innocent individuals.

Abolishing life sentencing does not mean abandoning justice or compromising public safety. There are several alternative sentencing models that can achieve similar goals while upholding human dignity and promoting rehabilitation. Determinate sentences, with appropriate lengths based on the severity of the crime and the offender's criminal history, can provide accountability and punishment without foreclosing the possibility of release. These sentences can be coupled with robust rehabilitation programs, including education, job training, and therapy, to help offenders address the underlying causes of their behavior and prepare for successful reintegration into society. Restorative justice practices, which focus on repairing the harm caused by crime and involving victims, offenders, and communities in the healing process, can also offer a more constructive and humane approach to accountability.

Furthermore, alternative sentencing models can be more cost-effective than life imprisonment. The high costs associated with maintaining elderly and infirm prisoners, coupled with the potential for reduced recidivism through rehabilitation, suggest that investing in alternatives to life sentencing can be both fiscally responsible and socially beneficial. By shifting resources from prisons to community-based programs, societies can address the root causes of crime, support victims, and create safer, healthier communities.

The arguments against life sentencing are compelling and multifaceted. Life sentences are not effective deterrents, do not meaningfully enhance community safety,

are excessively cruel, disproportionately affect marginalized communities, and pose a significant risk of irreversible injustice due to wrongful convictions. By clinging to this punitive practice, the United States not only fails to achieve its goals of justice and public safety but also violates fundamental principles of human dignity and perpetuates cycles of inequality. It is time to abolish life sentencing and embrace more humane and effective approaches to criminal justice. By investing in prevention, rehabilitation, and restorative justice, societies can create a more just and equitable system that upholds the value and potential of every human being.

VI. Jails Mostly Torture the Innocent

Bob Marley sang, “Set the captive free” in his hit song, “Exodus”. The abolition of jails is also a necessary and just goal for a society that values freedom, equality, and human dignity. Jails, as they currently exist, represent a flawed system that disproportionately harms the poor and marginalized, often detaining individuals who have not been convicted of any crime. The injustices perpetuated by the jail system are multifaceted, stemming from the inequities of cash bail, the presumption of guilt rather than innocence, and the often inhumane conditions within these facilities. Among these conditions, issues relating to low-quality food, dangerously low temperatures, and the spread of disease further add to the urgent need for abolition.

One of the most glaring issues with the current jail system is the widespread practice of detaining individuals pretrial. The presumption of innocence, a cornerstone of the American legal system, is severely undermined when individuals are incarcerated before they have been found guilty of a crime. At midyear 2023, 70% of the jail population, or 467,600 people, were unconvicted, either awaiting court action or held for other reasons. These individuals are legally innocent, yet they are deprived of their liberty, families, and livelihoods. This pretrial detention can have devastating consequences, leading to job loss, housing instability, and separation from children. Moreover, studies have shown that people detained pretrial are more likely to plead guilty, often succumbing to the pressures of incarceration, resulting in higher conviction rates and harsher punishments. This creates a system where the scales of justice are tipped against those who have not even been proven guilty.

The cash bail system further exacerbates the inequities within the jail system. It creates a two-tiered system of justice, where those with financial resources can purchase their freedom, while the poor remain incarcerated. This system disproportionately affects low-income individuals and communities of color, who are often assigned higher bail amounts and are less able to afford their release. The median bail amount set by courts in 2015 for felony accusations was \$10,000, while the median annual income for a person in pretrial detention that year was only \$15,109. This economic disparity effectively criminalizes poverty, as individuals are detained not because they pose a threat to public safety but because they cannot afford to pay for their freedom.

The cash bail system also fuels a predatory bail bond industry, which profits from the misfortune of those with limited resources. These companies extract non-refundable fees from individuals and families, trapping them in cycles of debt, even if charges are dropped or no evidence of wrongdoing is found. This further destabilizes low-income communities, draining them of critical economic resources. The consequences of cash bail extend beyond the individual, impacting families and communities. When a family member is incarcerated, families often struggle to make ends meet, facing financial instability and emotional distress. Children with incarcerated parents are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The cash bail system, therefore, not only punishes the accused but also inflicts harm on their loved ones and the wider community.

In addition to the injustices of pretrial detention and cash bail, the conditions within jails are often inhumane and detrimental to the mental and physical health of inmates. Overcrowding, violence, and lack of adequate medical and mental health care are pervasive issues in many jail facilities. The number of incarcerated people with mental illnesses is growing across the country, raising critical questions about using prisons instead of hospitals to manage serious mental health problems. More than half of all Americans in prison or jail have a mental illness.

Compounding these issues is the quality of food provided to incarcerated individuals. Meals in jails are often of low quality, lacking in nutritional value and often prepared under substandard conditions. Many reports indicate that food served in jails can be spoiled, unappetizing, and insufficient for maintaining basic health standards. In some instances, the food is so poor that individuals are forced to rely on commissary purchases, which are often expensive and out of reach for those without financial support.

Furthermore, dangerously low temperatures within prisons can lead to severe health problems. Many jails are inadequately heated, exposing inmates to frigid conditions during winter months. In Pennsylvania, for example, inmates have reported temperatures so cold that they could see their breath inside their cells. Without proper heating and insulation, these environments pose serious health risks, including hypothermia and worsening of existing medical conditions. Individuals who enter jail with chronic health issues face heightened dangers as their conditions can rapidly deteriorate due to extreme temperatures.

The combination of poor food quality, extreme temperatures, and insufficient medical care wreaks havoc on the health of incarcerated populations. The lack of access to proper nutrition exacerbates existing health conditions and can lead to the emergence of new illnesses, creating a public health crisis within correctional facilities. Studies show that incarcerated individuals are already at higher risk for infectious diseases, and poor nutrition only increases vulnerabilities to diseases like tuberculosis and other transmissible infections that can spread rapidly in overcrowded settings.

The abolition of jails is not simply about closing down these facilities. It is about creating a fundamental shift in how society responds to crime. It requires a recognition of the inherent injustices of the current system and a willingness to dismantle the structures that perpetuate inequality and harm.

The transition to a jail-free society will not be easy, and it will require a sustained effort from policymakers, community organizations, and individuals. However, the potential benefits of such a transformation are immense, including safer communities, a more just and equitable society, and a more humane and compassionate approach to those who have been accused of crimes.

The time has come to abolish jails and create a system of justice that prioritizes rehabilitation, community-based solutions, and the presumption of innocence. By dismantling the structures that perpetuate inequality and harm, and by investing in programs that address the root causes of crime, society can create a future where all individuals have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. The abolition of jails is not just a policy proposal; it is a moral imperative, a call for a society that values justice, equality, and the inherent dignity of all human beings.

VII. An Evil Etymology

The etymology of the word prison comes from the proto-European, “to kidnap” or “take a person”. The modern prison system, despite its stated goals of rehabilitation and public safety, often fails to achieve these outcomes. High recidivism rates, overcrowding, and the perpetuation of cycles of poverty and violence are just some of the challenges plaguing contemporary correctional facilities. As such, there is a growing call for radical reform, one that envisions alternatives to traditional incarceration. This section argues for the abolition of prisons and their replacement with "penal cities," communities designed to rehabilitate offenders through comprehensive social, psychological, and medical support, rather than through punishment and isolation. These penal cities, drawing inspiration from historical penal colonies but fundamentally different in their approach, would prioritize mental health, social work, and medical care, with law enforcement playing a supporting role. By creating environments focused on restoration and reintegration, penal cities offer a more ethical and effective path toward public safety and social justice.

The current prison system is beset by numerous failures, rendering it an inadequate solution to crime. One of the most glaring issues is the high rate of recidivism, with a significant percentage of released prisoners being rearrested within a few years. This suggests that prisons are not effectively deterring crime or rehabilitating offenders. In fact, incarceration can often exacerbate criminal behavior by exposing individuals to a culture of violence, isolating them from positive social influences, and creating barriers to employment and housing upon release. The lack of adequate educational and vocational training programs within prisons further hinders the ability of former inmates to successfully reintegrate into society.

Overcrowding is another critical problem in prisons, leading to inhumane living conditions, increased violence, and the spread of infectious diseases. Overcrowded facilities strain resources and make it difficult to provide adequate mental health care, medical treatment, and other essential services. The emphasis on punishment and security often overshadows the need for rehabilitation, creating a cycle of despair and recidivism. Moreover, the use of solitary confinement, a common practice in many prisons, has been shown to have severe psychological effects, leading to anxiety, depression, and even psychosis.

The economic costs of maintaining the prison system are also substantial. Taxpayers bear the burden of funding correctional facilities, which divert resources

from other essential services such as education, health care, and infrastructure. The high cost of incarceration, coupled with its limited effectiveness, raises serious questions about the wisdom of continuing to invest in a system that fails to deliver on its promises. Furthermore, the economic consequences of incarceration extend beyond the direct costs of maintaining prisons. Incarceration can lead to job loss, reduced earnings, and increased poverty for offenders and their families, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage and inequality.

Penal cities offer a fundamentally different approach to crime and punishment, one that prioritizes rehabilitation, restoration, and reintegration. Drawing inspiration from historical penal colonies, these communities would be designed to provide a supportive and therapeutic environment for offenders, focusing on addressing the root causes of their behavior and equipping them with the skills and resources needed to lead productive lives. Unlike traditional prisons, which isolate and punish, penal cities would foster a sense of community and belonging, promoting positive social interaction and reducing the likelihood of recidivism. Only people with murder and attempted murder convictions would ever be sent to one. All non-violent offenses would result in fines that would go on one's credit report. All violent offenses would result in house arrest with transportation provided to work or school.

Moreover, at the heart of the penal city model is a multidisciplinary team of professionals, including mental health counselors, social workers, medical staff, and educators. These experts would work collaboratively to assess the needs of each offender, develop individualized treatment plans, and provide ongoing support and guidance. Mental health services would be a central component, addressing issues such as trauma, addiction, and mental illness, which often contribute to criminal behavior. Social workers would provide case management, connecting offenders with housing, employment, and other essential services. Medical staff would ensure access to quality health care, addressing both physical and mental health needs.

Law enforcement would play a different role in penal cities than in traditional prisons. Instead of serving primarily as guards and enforcers, police officers would work in collaboration with mental health professionals and social workers to maintain order and ensure the safety of the community. They would be trained in de-escalation techniques, conflict resolution, and crisis intervention, with an emphasis on building relationships and fostering trust with residents. The use of force would be minimized, and officers would prioritize communication and empathy in their interactions with offenders.

The transition from prisons to penal cities raises several ethical and practical considerations. One concern is the potential for these communities to become stigmatized and isolated, perpetuating the very problems they are intended to solve. To mitigate this risk, it is crucial to integrate penal cities into the broader community, fostering interaction and collaboration with surrounding towns and cities. This could involve establishing partnerships with local businesses, schools, and organizations, as well as creating opportunities for residents of penal cities to participate in community events and activities.

Another ethical consideration is the need to ensure that the rights and dignity of offenders are respected within penal cities. While these communities would be designed to provide a therapeutic environment, it is essential to avoid creating conditions that are overly restrictive or dehumanizing. Residents should have access to meaningful work, educational opportunities, and recreational activities, as well as the ability to maintain contact with their families and loved ones. The use of restorative justice practices, such as victim-offender mediation and community conferencing, could help to promote accountability and healing while empowering victims and communities.

The economic feasibility of replacing prisons with penal cities is another important consideration. While the initial investment in creating these communities may be significant, the long-term cost savings associated with reduced recidivism, improved public health, and increased economic productivity could outweigh the upfront expenses. By investing in rehabilitation and reintegration, rather than simply warehousing offenders, penal cities have the potential to generate a positive return on investment for taxpayers and communities. Moreover, the shift to a rehabilitative model could create new job opportunities in mental health, social work, education, and other related fields, stimulating local economies and providing meaningful employment for community residents.

Restorative justice is a key component of the penal city model. Instead of focusing solely on punishment, restorative justice emphasizes repairing the harm caused by crime and promoting reconciliation between offenders, victims, and communities. This approach involves bringing together all parties affected by a crime to discuss the impact of the offense, identify ways to make amends, and develop a plan for moving forward. Restorative justice practices can take various forms, including victim-offender mediation, community conferencing, and sentencing circles.

Community involvement is also essential to the success of penal cities. By engaging community members in the design, implementation, and oversight of these

communities, it is possible to foster a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for rehabilitation. Community members can serve as mentors, tutors, and volunteers, providing support and guidance to residents of penal cities. They can also participate in restorative justice processes, helping to facilitate dialogue, promote healing, and ensure that the needs of victims are met.

The shift from prisons to penal cities necessitates a fundamental transformation in the training and practices of correctional staff. Instead of focusing primarily on security and control, correctional officers would need to develop skills in mental health support, crisis intervention, and conflict resolution. They would work collaboratively with mental health professionals, social workers, and medical staff to create a therapeutic environment and promote positive relationships with residents.

Effective training programs would need to incorporate elements of psychology, sociology, and social work, as well as practical skills in de-escalation, communication, and cultural sensitivity. Correctional officers would need to understand the root causes of criminal behavior, the impact of trauma and mental illness, and the principles of restorative justice. They would also need to be trained in recognizing and responding to signs of mental distress, providing support to residents in crisis, and facilitating access to mental health services.

Moreover, correctional facilities need to emphasize communication and treating people with dignity and respect, no matter their crime or how they treat you. It is also critical for line managers to encourage officers' professional development by providing direction, support, and motivation to participate in training opportunities.

In conclusion, my recommendation is that people with crimes involving weapons like guns, knives, bombs, or cars, etc. should be placed on house arrest until being sent to a "penal city" upon determination of guilt. The stay in the penal city would be determined by a council of mental health workers and social workers with 5 years being the maximum for any violent crime, including murder, unless the person reoffends while in the penal district. All criminality is a mental health issue. Every yearly review of a person's sentence length would be handled by a different council of mental health workers and social workers. They will not be able to consider previous arguments and decisions made by the previous council. It will be a blind assessment.

VIII. C Students with Guns

Do you know that 7 out of 10 police don't have bachelor degrees? You need a degree to brush someone's teeth at a dentist office, but you can walk around with a gun after some on-the-job training. We should require all entry-level police officers to have a B.A. in Legal Studies, particularly with a focus on constitutional law and human rights. In an era where policing is under comprehensive scrutiny, law enforcement professionals must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of law, ethics, and community interactions. The significance of obtaining a B.A. in Legal Studies for police officers is particularly relevant for entry-level positions, while higher-ranked officers must attain a M.S. in Criminal Justice to better prepare them for their duties.

A key advantage of a B.A. in Legal Studies is the thorough understanding of constitutional law it provides. Police officers are entrusted with the responsibility of upholding the law, which requires an in-depth familiarity with the U.S. Constitution, state constitutions, and associated legal principles. Officers who are well-versed in the Constitution are better positioned to perform their duties within the legal framework, ensuring that they respect the rights of individuals while enforcing the law. For instance, an officer knowledgeable about the Fourth Amendment can effectively assess the legality of stops, searches, and seizures, ensuring their actions align with constitutional requirements.

Moreover, the focus on human rights in legal studies educates officers on the important ethical considerations inherent in policing. Understanding human rights principles enables officers to maintain a respectful approach in their interactions with the community, which is fundamental for building trust. When officers recognize that every citizen is entitled to dignity and respect, they are less likely to engage in abusive or discriminatory practices. An educated force enhances not just the effectiveness of policing but also the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

A B.A. in Legal Studies further cultivates critical thinking and analytical skills, which are indispensable in police work. Officers are often required to analyze complex situations rapidly and make informed decisions that can have significant ramifications. The educational background developed through a legal studies program equips them

with tools to assess scenarios from multiple perspectives, leading to sound decision-making and decreased potential for misuse of police power.

Another significant benefit of a legal studies education is the enhanced proficiency in report writing and documentation. Accurate documentation is crucial in law enforcement, as it impacts legal processes and community perceptions of police professionalism. Officers trained in legal studies develop strong writing skills through various assignments, enabling them to prepare detailed and clear reports that better support their testimonies in court and provide transparency to the community.

Additionally, the B.A. in Legal Studies prepares officers to navigate ethical dilemmas inherent in law enforcement. Ethical conduct remains a cornerstone of maintaining public trust and integrity within police departments. Officers educated in legal studies are better equipped to approach decision-making with a comprehensive ethical framework, reducing the likelihood of corruption or misconduct within the force.

Understanding social issues surrounding policing also forms a critical component of a law enforcement officer's education. A legal studies program instills awareness of systemic injustices and social inequalities that can inform officers' approaches in community policing. This perspective leads to more informed and compassionate policing strategies, particularly in diverse communities, as officers learn to appreciate the socio-political context of their work.

As police departments evolve, the search for candidates with formal education credentials has intensified. Holding a B.A. in Legal Studies is becoming a preferred qualification among law enforcement agencies and may even affect hiring promotions. Studies reveal that departments that emphasize education in their training protocols often report lower rates of citizen complaints and increased agency legitimacy.

Beyond improving individual competencies, a B.A. in Legal Studies enhances the professionalism of entire departments. By attracting candidates who are educated and aware of their legal obligations and ethical responsibilities, police agencies can promote a culture of accountability and community cooperation. Furthermore, fostering an educated workforce contributes to the overall societal trust in law enforcement institutions, which is paramount as the nation grapples with issues related to policing practices.

Police officers must recognize the pivotal role they play within democracy and the protection of civil liberties. A legal studies background encourages them to approach their responsibilities not only as law enforcers but as guardians of justice and

civil rights. Such officers embody the spirit of the Constitution and work towards upholding the tenets of democracy through their daily interactions with the public.

Uneducated officers often exhibit a deficient understanding of constitutional law, leading to violations of citizens' rights. They may struggle with the nuances of search and seizure laws, resulting in unlawful stops and arrests. A lack of awareness of due process rights can lead to mishandled investigations and compromised prosecutions. Insufficient knowledge of legal procedures can also result in mishandling evidence, jeopardizing the integrity of cases. Without a solid grounding in legal principles, officers may misinterpret laws, leading to unjust enforcement. Their limited understanding can cause wrongful accusations due to misapplication of legal codes. The result is a system where justice is unevenly applied, eroding public trust and undermining the legitimacy of law enforcement.

Uneducated officers may struggle with effective communication, leading to misunderstandings and escalations in tense situations. They often lack the skills to de-escalate conflicts verbally, resulting in unnecessary use of force. Poor communication can hinder their ability to build rapport with community members, fostering distrust. These officers may exhibit a limited understanding of cultural differences, leading to biased interactions with diverse populations. Their communication style can be perceived as aggressive or insensitive, further damaging community relations. Without adequate training, they are less likely to employ empathy and active listening, crucial for effective conflict resolution. This deficiency in interpersonal skills contributes to a cycle of misunderstanding and animosity between law enforcement and the public.

Uneducated officers often display poor decision-making in critical situations, leading to ineffective policing strategies. Their limited education can hinder their ability to analyze complex problems and develop innovative solutions. They may rely on biased or outdated policing methods, perpetuating systemic issues. A lack of critical thinking skills can result in knee-jerk reactions rather than thoughtful assessments of situations. Moreover, uneducated officers are less likely to adapt to changing community needs, making them ineffective in addressing evolving crime patterns. Their decisions may be influenced by personal biases, leading to discriminatory practices. Consequently, the communities they serve may suffer from ineffective and unjust policing practices.

Uneducated officers frequently demonstrate poor report writing skills, leading to inaccurate or incomplete documentation. Their reports may lack critical details,

hindering investigations and legal proceedings. Grammatical and spelling errors can undermine the credibility of their reports in court. They may struggle to articulate complex information clearly, causing confusion and misinterpretations. Incomplete documentation can lead to mishandled cases and wrongful convictions. Furthermore, a lack of attention to detail in their reports can jeopardize the integrity of evidence. As a result, the reliability of legal processes is compromised, impacting both victims and accused.

Uneducated officers are more prone to ethical breaches and misconduct, damaging public trust in law enforcement. They may display a lack of understanding regarding ethical standards, leading to abuses of power. They often struggle with maintaining professionalism, contributing to a negative perception of the police force. Uneducated officers may be more susceptible to corruption due to a lack of ethical training. A diminished understanding of ethical responsibilities can lead to discriminatory behavior and unjust treatment of citizens. Consequently, the integrity of the entire law enforcement agency is compromised.

The facts presented underscore the critical importance of education in law enforcement. Addressing the deficiencies in uneducated officers through comprehensive training, higher educational standards, and a commitment to ongoing professional development is crucial for fostering a more just, effective, and trustworthy police force. By prioritizing education, law enforcement agencies can better serve and protect their communities, ensuring that officers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding necessary to navigate the complexities of modern policing.

Furthermore, in the United States, law enforcement officers occupy a unique position within the legal system, wielding considerable authority and discretion. While these powers are ostensibly granted to maintain order and protect citizens, numerous legal statutes and doctrines afford police officers privileged status, often shielding them from accountability and perpetuating a system where misconduct can go unchecked. This section examines the various ways in which American police benefit from privileged legal status, analyzing the implications for justice, equality, and public trust.

IX. Officer Scott Free

One of the most significant legal privileges afforded to police officers is the doctrine of qualified immunity. Qualified immunity protects state and local officials, including law enforcement officers, from individual liability in civil lawsuits unless their conduct violates clearly established statutory or constitutional rights, and there's existing case law with nearly identical facts. This means that even if an officer acts unlawfully, they cannot be held personally responsible unless a prior court case has already deemed similar actions illegal.

The Supreme Court introduced qualified immunity in 1967 in *Pierson v. Ray* to protect officers from liability after they arrested clergy members for using a segregated waiting room. The Court ruled the officers could not be held liable if they acted in good faith and with probable cause. However, the doctrine has expanded significantly since then. A 1982 Supreme Court case, *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*, eliminated the requirement that officers act in good faith and provided immunity unless their conduct violated “clearly established law”. This has been interpreted to mean that unless a past case closely matches the facts of the officer’s conduct, the officer cannot be held liable, regardless of how egregious their actions.

Qualified immunity has been used to protect officials who have engaged in a variety of misconduct, including fatal shootings, police brutality, stealing, and sexual misconduct. For example, an officer who released a police dog on a suspect who had surrendered was granted qualified immunity because the prior case involved a suspect who surrendered by lying down, not sitting with his hands raised. Another officer who used a "takedown maneuver" against a small woman, breaking her collarbone, was also granted immunity because there was no prior case with the exact same set of facts.

Critics argue that qualified immunity effectively shields law enforcement officers from accountability, making it difficult for victims of police misconduct to seek justice. By setting an unreasonably high legal barrier, victims must identify a near-identical precedent to challenge misconduct. As Justice Sonia Sotomayor noted, the doctrine has become an “absolute shield” for law enforcement officers, telling them they can "shoot first and think later". Between 2015 and 2019, victims of misconduct lost more year after year when facing qualified immunity defenses from officials.

In addition to qualified immunity, many states have enacted Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBOR), which provide additional legal protections to police officers facing investigation or disciplinary action. These laws vary from state to state,

but they often include provisions that guarantee officers the right to be notified when they are under investigation, the right to legal representation during questioning, and protection from reassignment.

LEOBORs can also limit the scope and duration of internal investigations, restrict the use of polygraph examinations, and mandate the expungement of disciplinary records after a certain period. Some LEOBORs prevent officer personal information from being released to the press. Critics argue that these protections make it more difficult to hold officers accountable for misconduct, hindering transparency and impeding efforts to reform police practices.

For example, LEOBORs may require that officers be given a 24-hour or 48-hour waiting period before being interrogated, allowing them time to consult with an attorney and coordinate their stories. They may also prohibit the use of prior misconduct complaints in disciplinary hearings, even if those complaints reveal a pattern of abuse. Additionally, some LEOBORs give officers the right to appeal disciplinary decisions to an outside arbitrator, who may be more sympathetic to the officer's perspective than the police chief or city officials.

Beyond these formal legal protections, police officers often benefit from an informal code of silence, known as the "blue wall of silence," which discourages officers from reporting misconduct by their colleagues. This code of silence can make it difficult to investigate and prosecute police misconduct, as officers may be reluctant to testify against one another.

Prosecutors, who often work closely with police officers on a daily basis, may also be hesitant to bring charges against them, particularly in cases involving use of force. This reluctance can be due to a variety of factors, including a fear of alienating the police department, a lack of confidence in securing a conviction, or a belief that the officer's actions were justified under the circumstances.

Data suggests that police officers are prosecuted for murder in less than 2 percent of cases. Even when officers are charged, they often receive preferential treatment from the legal system, including reduced sentences or acquittals. A 2016 study found that about 72 percent of officers charged in cases with known outcomes are convicted, more than 40 percent of the crimes are committed on duty. This is despite the fact that officers are often held to a higher standard of conduct than ordinary citizens.

Police officers are granted broad discretion in carrying out their duties, including the authority to use force when necessary. While the use of force is governed by legal

standards and departmental policies, officers often have wide latitude in determining what level of force is appropriate in a given situation.

The Supreme Court has held that the Fourth Amendment prohibits police from using excessive force when apprehending a suspect or making an arrest. However, the Court has also recognized that officers must make split-second decisions in rapidly evolving and often dangerous circumstances. As a result, courts often defer to an officer's judgment, even when the use of force results in serious injury or death.

This deference, combined with the legal privileges discussed above, can create a situation where officers are effectively given a license to use force with impunity. The disproportionate use of force against minority communities, particularly Black people, has raised serious concerns about racial bias and systemic inequality in law enforcement. Black men represent over 24% of people killed by police, while only comprising 6% of the U.S. population.

Police unions also contribute to the privileged legal status of police officers in America. Through collective bargaining agreements, police unions can negotiate contracts that provide officers with additional protections and benefits, including limitations on disciplinary procedures, restrictions on civilian oversight, and indemnification in civil lawsuits.

A study by Professor Stephen Rushin found that police union contracts frequently contain provisions that impede officer discipline and police reform. These provisions can include limiting officer interrogations after alleged wrongdoing, mandating the destruction of officer disciplinary records, banning civilian oversight of police misconduct, preventing anonymous civilian complaints, indemnifying officers in civil suits, or requiring arbitration in cases of disciplinary action.

In another study, Rushin examined the disciplinary appeals processes established by police union contracts in over 600 cities and concluded that, due to union contract provisions, police departments must often rehire or significantly reduce disciplinary sanctions against officers who have engaged in serious misconduct.

The legal privileges afforded to police officers in America have created a system where misconduct can go unchecked and accountability is often elusive. Reforming this system requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the various sources of police privilege and promotes greater transparency, oversight, and accountability.

One key reform is to revisit the doctrine of qualified immunity, which has been criticized for shielding officers from liability even in cases of egregious misconduct.

Congress or the Supreme Court could amend or abolish the doctrine to ensure that officers are held accountable for violating citizens' constitutional rights.

Another important step is to reform LEOBORs to remove provisions that impede investigations and disciplinary actions. States should consider repealing or amending these laws to ensure that police officers are subject to the same standards of accountability as other public employees. Additionally, increased transparency and public access to police disciplinary records and internal investigations can help to build trust and deter misconduct.

Strengthening civilian oversight boards and empowering them to conduct independent investigations and make recommendations for disciplinary action can also help to improve police accountability. Finally, addressing the "blue wall of silence" requires a cultural shift within police departments that encourages officers to report misconduct and protects whistleblowers from retaliation.

The privileged legal status afforded to police in America has created a system where misconduct can go unchecked and accountability is often elusive. By examining the various legal statutes and doctrines that contribute to this privilege, including qualified immunity, LEOBORs, police discretion, and the influence of police unions, it becomes clear that reform is necessary to promote justice, equality, and public trust. By revisiting these laws, promoting greater transparency, and fostering a culture of accountability within law enforcement agencies, the United States can move towards a system where all citizens are treated fairly and with respect under the law.

X. Tired Masses

Moreover, let's change gears and discuss immigration. Did you know that Mexican immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than U.S.-born citizens? The debate surrounding immigration reform in the United States has been contentious and multifaceted, reflecting deeply ingrained societal attitudes that often oscillate between compassion and fear. It is increasingly evident, however, that a sustainable solution to the challenges posed by undocumented immigrants lies in offering a pathway to citizenship that is both compassionate and practical. Specifically, allowing immigrants to gain immediate citizenship upon passing rigorous background checks or agreeing to participate in rehabilitation programs for those with criminal records presents a balanced approach that recognizes their contributions while addressing public safety concerns. This section aims to explore the rationale behind this proposal, considering economic, social, and ethical dimensions.

One of the most compelling arguments for allowing immigrants to gain citizenship swiftly is the economic gains that accompany such a decision. According to a study by the Center for American Progress, granting a pathway to citizenship for all undocumented immigrants in the United States could increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by up to \$1.7 trillion over the next decade, thereby benefiting both citizens and migrants alike. This remarkable economic impact revolves around increased consumer spending, enhanced workforce participation, and heightened tax revenues.

When immigrants acquire citizenship, they become eligible for better-paying jobs, which not only improves their own financial status but also contributes to overall economic growth. A recent report estimated that the annual wage increase for eligible undocumented workers could reach \$14,000 after full implementation of citizenship pathways. As these individuals secure better employment and contribute more significantly to the economy, the resultant boost in tax revenues can fund public services and infrastructure, ultimately fostering a more prosperous society for everyone.

Moreover, a significant portion of the undocumented immigrant population consists of essential workers who have been crucial to the U.S. economy, especially during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Empowering them through permanent legal status facilitates a sense of belonging and security, motivating them to invest further in their communities. Studies indicate that immigrants are 80 percent more likely to start their own businesses compared to native-born citizens, driving entrepreneurship and

creating job opportunities that benefit the broader economy. By extending instant citizenship upon passing background checks or participating in rehabilitation programs, we would affirm the valuable contributions of undocumented immigrants to our society while harnessing their potential for greater economic impact.

The issue of criminal records among immigrants often stirs fears regarding public safety. Critics argue that undocumented immigrants with criminal backgrounds pose a threat and should be automatically excluded from pathways to citizenship. Yet, evidence suggests that many of these individuals are guilty of minor infractions or nonviolent offenses, often stemming from their marginalized status within society. Offering these individuals a chance at rehabilitation rather than outright removal or exclusion from citizenship can be a far more effective solution.

Justice is not solely punitive; it also encompasses rehabilitative measures that encourage individuals to learn from their mistakes and reintegrate into society. Allowing immigrants with criminal backgrounds to qualify for citizenship through participation in rehabilitation programs recognizes their potential for transformation. Such programs often focus on skills development, addiction recovery, and community service, ultimately equipping participants with the tools necessary for reintegration and positive contributions to their communities. Evidence supports the efficacy of rehabilitation programs, exhibiting success rates as high as 87 percent among immigrant participants.

Moreover, these pathways to citizenship, grounded in accountability and personal growth, also serve to reduce recidivism rates, leading to a more cohesive and safer society. By confronting the root causes of criminal behavior through targeted rehabilitation—be it poverty, lack of access to education, or mental health issues—we can create an environment conducive to healing and growth. This compassionate approach aligns with societal values of second chances and collective responsibility, guiding individuals toward a constructive role within their communities rather than forcing them into the shadows of society.

Beyond economic considerations, allowing instant citizenship through background checks and rehabilitation programs promotes positive social integration and community cohesion. Immigrants are integral to the cultural tapestry of the United States, enriching it with diverse perspectives, experiences, and practices. When they are treated as equals rather than outlaws, they can constructively engage with their neighborhoods and participate meaningfully in civic life.

Citizenship empowers individuals to make their voices heard through voting, thereby ensuring that the concerns of immigrant communities are addressed in public policy. Statistics indicate that when granted citizenship, immigrants are more likely to engage in local community initiatives, volunteer efforts, and even run for local office, further strengthening social networks and fostering inclusivity.

Fostering a sense of belonging among immigrants helps to diminish the social tensions that often arise from misunderstanding and prejudice. The recent waves of anti-immigrant sentiment have underscored the need for actions that reinforce inclusivity and mutual respect. Enabling immigrants to obtain citizenship reinforces the idea that they are part of our society, not apart from it. This contributes to societal harmony, where diverse communities share a sense of mutual responsibility toward public safety and welfare.

Public opinion data consistently reflects a significant appetite for pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, especially those who do not have serious criminal records. Recent polling indicates that a strong majority of Americans support allowing undocumented immigrants, particularly those who arrived as children, to obtain citizenship. This sentiment transcends political affiliations, underscoring an emerging consensus around inclusion and social justice.

The push for reform is partly fueled by awareness of the vital roles immigrants play in various sectors, from healthcare to agriculture. During the pandemic, the resilience and contributions of immigrant workers became acutely visible. Thus, supporting comprehensive reform that includes instant citizenship pathways emerges not only as a practical step toward addressing immigration concerns but also a moral imperative that aligns with the values of equality and fairness deeply rooted in American identity.

In conclusion, the proposal to allow immigrants to gain instant citizenship upon passing background checks or agreeing to participate in rehabilitation programs strikes a critical balance between upholding societal safety and fostering inclusivity. The economic benefits of such a measure are significant, enhancing GDP and driving entrepreneurial spirit while simultaneously reinforcing the social fabric of communities across the nation. Moreover, the focus on rehabilitation recognizes the human capacity for growth and change, turning potential adversities into avenues for positive community contribution. In light of prevailing public support for pathways to citizenship, it becomes increasingly clear that such measures represent the future of immigration policy in America. By moving past punitive measures and embracing

compassionate, evidence-based solutions, we can build a more equitable, economically robust, and cohesive society—one that genuinely embodies the spirit of the “land of opportunity.” The time has come to recognize that immigrants, with or without criminal records, have the potential to enrich our nation in innumerable ways, and offering them a pathway to citizenship is an essential step toward realizing that potential.

XI. Corporate Tyrants

Though there are about 8 million e-commerce companies in the United States, Amazon holds nearly 50% of the market share. Still, in 2017 for instance, Amazon paid three times less than the standard capital tax rate. In this section, I would argue they should not only be broken up, they should have been paying more taxes than the government requires them to as of today. The prospect of taxing monopolistic companies at a higher rate invokes significant economic discussion, as it can have a far-reaching impact on market dynamics, consumer behavior, and overall economic growth. Monopolistic firms, due to their dominant market positions, exert considerable control over pricing and production, often leading to inefficiencies and reduced competition. A restructured tax policy that imposes higher taxes on these entities can yield both immediate and long-term consequences for the economy. This section explores the multifaceted effects of higher taxation on monopolistic companies, focusing on potential changes in market structure, consumer prices, investment behavior, and government revenues.

One of the primary mechanisms through which higher taxes on monopolistic firms can benefit the economy is by rebalancing market dynamics. Monopolies tend to disincentivize competition through their pricing power, ensuring profitability often at the expense of innovation and consumer choice. By implementing higher tax rates on monopolistic profits, governments can diminish the excessive market power wielded by these firms. Such a tax structure would ideally aim to curb super-normal profits—those profits stemming not from efficiency or innovation but from controlling significant market shares.

Economists suggest that imposing higher taxes on excess profits can encourage monopolistic firms to lower their prices to maintain competitive standing in the marketplace, thereby benefiting consumers. This pricing adjustment can foster a more

vibrant competitive environment, enabling smaller businesses to thrive alongside larger corporations. For example, studies indicate that excess profits in monopoly-led industries do not translate into increased innovation or better products but rather allow for rent-seeking behaviors. With higher taxation curbing these excesses, the landscape would be more favorable for innovation-driven competition.

Tax increases on monopolistic companies are likely to have a direct bearing on consumer prices. Under the conventional expectation, one might anticipate that monopolists would simply pass on these higher tax burdens to consumers by increasing prices. However, empirical research shows that monopolists have more flexibility in absorbing some costs due to their profit margins. For instance, the downward pressure on consumer prices may not merely reflect tax adjustments but rather a structural change in how these large corporations operate under a revised tax scheme.

In the long run, if monopolies are compelled to adjust their pricing strategies due to higher tax burdens, this can result in more favorable pricing for consumers. Studies reveal that a more progressive corporate taxation framework can mitigate the pricing power of monopolists, fostering a more equitable market for consumers wherein access to goods and services remains competitively priced. This reform ensures consumers benefit from lower prices as monopolies are incentivized to compete more aggressively to safeguard their market share.

A potential downside of imposing higher taxes on monopolistic companies is the effect it may have on investment and innovation. Critics often argue that higher tax burdens deter firms from reinvesting back into their businesses, particularly in research and development (R&D). The rationale is that when corporate taxation increases, firms may subsequently experience lower net returns on investment, discouraging them from pursuing innovative ventures.

However, it is crucial to consider that monopolistic firms typically possess substantial cash reserves, allowing them to absorb higher taxation while still investing in new projects. In a study by the National Bureau of Economic Research, it was found that while higher taxes do influence investment decisions, firms with significant market power are less susceptible to these effects due to their capacity to manage cash flow more effectively. Therefore, instead of completely stifling innovation, a well-designed tax policy could direct monopolistic firms toward creating value in ways that benefit society, necessitating public accountability alongside financial sustainability.

Taxing monopolistic companies at higher rates can also play a vital role in addressing the economic inequalities exacerbated by their dominance. Since monopolies

concentrate wealth among a small number of shareholders and executives, redistributing revenue through tax mechanisms allows for enhanced government resources to be allocated toward community-centric programs, infrastructure, and healthcare—areas often underfunded in a monopoly-driven economy.

Moreover, higher tax revenues can also be utilized to promote small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) struggling to compete against monopolistic giants. This shift can yield substantial economic benefits, generating jobs and stimulating economic growth across various sectors. Empirical evidence suggests that a thriving SME sector contributes more robustly to GDP growth than large monopolistic firms, as they are often more adaptive and innovative. By fostering competition, thereby diluting the concentration of wealth and power, higher taxation on monopolies ultimately supports a broader and more equitable economic recovery.

In conclusion, the effects of implementing higher taxes on monopolistic companies are intricate and multifaceted, impacting market dynamics, consumer pricing, innovation, and economic equity. While there are concerns about potential negative consequences on investment and growth, the overall evidence supports the idea that a comprehensive approach to taxation can lead to a healthier economic landscape characterized by greater competition and consumer prosperity. A tax policy designed to target excessive profits can help combat the adverse outcomes commonly associated with monopolistic practices, ultimately creating a fairer, more equitable economy that nurtures both business success and societal well-being. As policymakers consider reforms in corporate taxation, it is imperative to recognize the potential for transformative change that lies in reshaping the corporate tax landscape in favor of broader economic health and vitality.

XII. A Real Tea Party

Barack Obama said "The tax code is riddled with loopholes, and a lot of the most well-off individuals and corporations pay lower rates than their secretaries." The ongoing conversation surrounding income inequality and tax policy has highlighted a crucial point: the need for a tax system that reflects not just the revenue-generating goals of the government, but also the principles of fairness and equity for every citizen. Current U.S. federal income tax brackets reveal a pattern where the marginal tax rate

increases disproportionately affect lower- and middle-income earners compared to their wealthy counterparts. As the income brackets escalate, the percentage increases in tax rates for the wealthy become less significant, causing an imbalance that perpetuates socioeconomic disparities. This section aims to propose a restructured tax system that ensures a more equitable increase in tax rates across all income levels, particularly by aligning the effective tax burdens on high-income earners with those on the lower brackets.

As of 2024, the federal income tax brackets for single filers in the United States are designed as follows:

- 10% on income up to \$11,600
- 12% on income from \$11,601 to \$47,150
- 22% on income from \$47,151 to \$100,525
- 24% on income from \$100,526 to \$191,950
- 32% on income from \$191,951 to \$243,725
- 35% on income from \$243,726 to \$609,350
- 37% on income above \$609,351.

While this progressive tax structure aims to distribute tax burdens based on an individual's ability to pay, the reality reveals a concerning trend: as income rises, the marginal tax rate increases do not correspond evenly with the income growth experienced by lower earners. For instance, the jump from 10% to 12% represents a 20% increase, but the shift from 35% to 37% is merely a 5.7% increase, indicating that high-income earners are not proportionately contributing to the financing of essential government services.

The disproportionate tax burden on lower and middle-income individuals adds further pressure to those already facing challenges, resulting in a progressive strain on economic stability. Research shows that households in the top 1% enjoy vast tax reductions due to various deductions, credits, and loopholes, while lower-income families remain shackled by their marginal rates. Hence, there exists an urgent need to recalibrate the tax structure to ensure that the wealthy contribute a fairer share.

To address the discrepancies in tax burdens, the proposed plan involves adjusting the income tax brackets and rates in such a way that the percentage increase in tax rates applies more equitably across all income levels. This proposal suggests a tiered

approach to tax restructuring by introducing a relativity measure to the tax increase percentage, creating a more consistent growth pattern in tax rates throughout.

The tax increase for each bracket should ideally reflect a progressive structure that promotes revenue generation while ensuring equity. The tax rates could be adjusted as follows:

- 5% on income up to \$11,600
- 10% on income from \$11,601 to \$47,150
- 15% on income from \$47,151 to \$100,525
- 30% on income from \$100,526 to \$191,950
- 35% on income from \$191,951 to \$243,725
- 40% on income from \$243,726 to \$609,350
- 50% on income above \$609,351.

Study this proposed income adjustment and think about how this would make Americans more tolerable for a majority of its citizens.

Alongside the restructuring of income tax rates, revisiting spending priorities, particularly with respect to national defense, is essential to bolster welfare programs that can support the most vulnerable. The current defense budget of approximately \$916 billion significantly overshadows other areas of government spending with demonstrable societal impacts. Following a reevaluation, it is proposed that the U.S. cuts its defense budget to 10% more than China's military spending, setting a new threshold of around \$521 billion.

The savings generated from reallocating nearly \$394 billion could provide critical funding for welfare programs, Medicaid expansion, food security initiatives (such as SNAP), affordable housing projects, and educational programs targeted at enhancing economic mobility.

The link between economic well-being and education must not be understated. Empowering individuals with skills for the modern market can break the cycle of poverty, reduce dependency on welfare systems, and foster greater economic growth overall. Adequate funding directed to education and job training could yield returns that far exceed the initial costs.

Shifting priorities from defense spending to social justice initiatives allows for a comprehensive approach to tackling inequality faced across various demographics. Such

reallocations could serve to strengthen overall economic stability and encourage a more equitable society.

The current disparities exhibited within the U.S. tax system reveal a critical need for reform designed to create a tax structure that upholds equity and fairness across all income levels. By restructuring tax rates to ensure growth aligns similarly among lower and higher income brackets while simultaneously reallocating defense spending towards critical social welfare initiatives, the path toward a more sustainable, inclusive economy can be paved. The proposed adjustments to tax rates promote responsibility among the wealthiest while lifting the burdens felt by lower-income individuals, ultimately fostering economic opportunity and reducing systemic inequity across the nation. It is time to embrace a tax policy that prioritizes shared growth, equity, and a prosperous future for all citizens, rather than a system that favors those who already possess wealth and resources.

The United States stands as the world leader in defense spending, allocating significantly more resources than any other nation. As of 2023, the U.S. defense budget reached approximately \$916 billion, a figure that encompasses a wide range of military expenditures, including personnel salaries, operational costs, and procurement of weapons. This level of expenditure accounts for nearly 40 percent of total global military spending, representing a staggering proportion compared to other nations.

In contrast, the second-highest military spender, China, allocated approximately \$296 billion in 2023, which is roughly one-third of the U.S. military budget. Russia follows with a military expenditure of around \$109 billion, signifying only about 12 percent of what the U.S. spends. Other notable military budgets include India with \$83.6 billion, Saudi Arabia at \$75.8 billion, and the United Kingdom with \$74.9 billion—none of which come close to the U.S. expenditure.

This discrepancy becomes even more pronounced when considering that the combined military spending of the top nine countries after the U.S. falls short of the total U.S. budget. Collectively, these nations spend approximately \$555 billion, which is still less than the U.S. budget alone. By simple comparison, the U.S. military budget exceeds that of the next nine highest spenders combined.

The overwhelming disparity in defense spending reflects not only the military capabilities and global strategic posture of the United States but also its role in international security. The U.S. defense budget is indicative of its commitment to NATO, ongoing military operations, and comprehensive national defense initiatives that aim to deter threats and protect its interests abroad.

While such high spending ensures a robust military presence, it also invites discourse on whether these expenditures are being utilized efficiently and effectively. As the Congressional Budget Office projects a decline in defense spending as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 2.9 percent in 2024 to 2.5 percent in 2034, discussions around priorities and the balance between military spending and domestic needs are increasingly relevant.

Moreover, the sheer scale of U.S. defense spending raises questions about sustainability and long-term ramifications, both economically and politically, especially in a world where other countries are significantly ramping up their military capabilities. In light of these factors, while the U.S. continues to enjoy military superiority, it becomes crucial to evaluate how these resources could more holistically contribute to both national security and global stability.

In conclusion, American defense spending vastly outstrips that of any other country, underscoring its position as the preeminent military power globally. With a budget of approximately \$916 billion, the U.S. spends more than the next nine highest military budgets combined. This highlights the United States' significant commitment to defense and international security; however, it also calls for a critical examination of how these resources are allocated to maximize both national security and overall welfare in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

XIII. 600,000 Times More Power

Direct democracy refers to a political system where citizens themselves have the power to directly vote on laws, policies, and other significant issues. Mechanisms such as ballot initiatives, referendums, and recalls enable citizens to propose new legislation, repeal existing laws, or remove elected officials from office. The implementation of such systems has already proven effective in various states; the expansion of these mechanisms to every level of government can enhance civic engagement and pride across the nation. Because the sum of the executive branch, legislative branch, and judicial branch equates to about 500 people that represent 300 million, establishing a direct democracy in America would increase citizen power by a measure of about 600,000. That is something to seriously take some time to think about.

One of the most salient benefits of direct democracy is its ability to engage citizens in the political process. When individuals can directly participate in decision-making, they tend to feel a stronger connection to their government and its policies. Research suggests that states with direct democracy features often experience higher voter turnout and increased political participation. The initiative process encourages citizens to become informed about key issues, stimulating public discourse and fostering instances of civic education and engagement.

Moreover, direct democracy empowers citizens by providing them with a mechanism to exert control over legislation. This is particularly crucial in a political climate where citizens often feel alienated from their representatives, who may be more attuned to the interests of wealthy donors or special interest groups than the voices of ordinary voters. By allowing the public to propose and vote on legislation, direct democracy diminishes the influence of entrenched political elites and facilitates a more equitable expression of the popular will.

The desire for more direct involvement often stems from dissatisfaction with traditional political processes, which can be perceived as slow, inefficient, or unresponsive. In states like California, where the initiative process has been effectively utilized, voters have managed to enact significant changes even when their elected representatives were unwilling to act. For instance, California voters passed Proposition 64 in 2016, legalizing recreational marijuana, acting independently of prevailing federal prohibitions and governmental inertia. By implementing direct democracy at all levels of government, citizens can gain renewed agency over their governance.

Another key advantage of direct democracy is its potential to enhance governmental accountability. In representative democracies, elected officials may become out of touch with their constituents, especially once they have been placed in office. This disconnect can lead to policies that do not reflect the desires or needs of the public, causing voters to lose faith in their representatives. Direct democracy provides a mechanism for voters to hold lawmakers accountable by enabling them to approve or reject legislative measures directly.

Ballot initiatives can serve as a check on legislative action, ensuring that harmful or unpopular policies do not go into effect. For instance, in several states, voters have successfully initiated referendums to challenge tax increases or unpopular regulations that their representatives attempted to impose. This capacity to check against legislative overreach can instill a sense of accountability for elected officials, pressuring them to act in alignment with their constituents' wishes.

Moreover, mechanisms like recalls can ensure that elected officials who fail to uphold their responsibilities or act against the interests of their constituents can be promptly removed from office. Historical examples, such as the recall of California Governor Gray Davis in 2003, demonstrate how direct democracy can provide a means for voters to respond to political failures. Such measures not only enhance accountability but also ensure that public officials remain cognizant of the electorate's expectations and preferences.

Direct democracy enables a more responsive approach to governance, allowing policies to be enacted that align closely with public sentiment. In an era defined by rapid social change and evolving priorities, direct democratic processes empower citizens to adapt laws to better reflect contemporary values and realities. By removing the barriers often encountered in legislative processes, direct democracy can facilitate a more dynamic political landscape.

The simplification of issue presentation inherent in direct democracy can expedite policy change. Instead of waiting for legislative sessions to yield results, citizens can vote directly on pressing matters. This speed is crucial in addressing urgent societal issues, such as climate change, public health, or civil rights, that may be neglected by legislators tied up in political maneuverings or bureaucratic red tape. For instance, ballot initiatives have been instrumental in advancing progressive measures, like the legalization of cannabis or the establishment of minimum wage increases in various states, when legislative efforts have stalled.

Moreover, direct democracy enhances policy experimentation, allowing states and localities to try out diverse solutions to common issues. Jurisdictions can learn from one another, leading to a more adaptive system of governance that can better respond to the needs of the public. Ballot measures related to healthcare policies, education reform, and social justice initiatives can vary based on local context while drawing from the collective knowledge of various direct democracy practices.

Despite the multitude of benefits associated with direct democracy, critics often raise concerns about its potential drawbacks, particularly regarding the complexity of issues, voter competence, and the risk of majority tyranny. It is true that some ballot measures may present challenges; complex policies cannot always be easily understood in a binary vote. However, this issue can be mitigated through comprehensive voter education initiatives and thoughtful campaign messaging that clarify the implications of proposed policies.

Furthermore, voter competence can be enhanced by ensuring that educational materials are readily accessible and that public forums encourage open discussions about the measures on the ballot. This investment in civic education will help equip citizens with the tools necessary to make informed choices, effectively countering critiques regarding a lack of comprehension.

The specter of majority tyranny, where the rights of minorities may be overwhelmed by dominant population segments, can be addressed through institutional safeguards that protect against potential abuses of power. For instance, initiatives can be crafted to include provisions that guarantee minority rights, while judicial review can serve to ensure that ballot measures remain compliant with constitutional standards. Educational initiatives to promote empathetic understanding of differing perspectives can further reduce polarization and enhance the deliberative nature of direct democracy processes.

As the United States continues to grapple with political discontent and the shortcomings of its representative system, the case for direct democracy at every level of government becomes increasingly compelling. By empowering citizens to engage actively in policy-making, enhancing governmental accountability, and promoting more responsive policies, direct democracy can rejuvenate American democratic practices. Though challenges exist, the benefits far outweigh the potential drawbacks, marking a crucial step toward a more participatory and citizen-oriented political landscape. Ultimately, the integration of direct democracy into the American governance framework will pave the way for a more responsive, accountable, and equitable political environment that serves the interests of all citizens, fostering a renewed sense of civic agency and connection to the democratic process.

XIV. Don't King Them

James Madison once said, "Washington, as the first president, was a monarch in all but name. The reverence in which he was held could have easily led to a monarchy if his character were not so firmly grounded in republican ideals." The role of the presidency remains a topic of significant debate. The traditional model, where the president functions as the head of the executive branch, concentrates vast powers in one office. This concentration risks the emergence of authoritarianism and diminishes the

democratic ideals upon which this nation was founded. This section argues for a fundamental shift in the structure of American governance toward a figurehead presidency, wherein the president embodies the role of a political philosopher or preacher-type leader while the military leadership is vested in the generals and military scientists. Such a restructuring aims to advocate for peace, ethical governance, and civilian empowerment, thereby diminishing the potential for abuse of power and enhancing the separation of military and political leadership.

The vision of a figurehead presidency proposes that the president should operate primarily as a symbolic leader, focused on inspiring the constituents and upholding the values of democracy rather than exerting significant executive power. In this paradigm, the president would act in the capacity of a political philosopher, weaving together ideas of justice, liberty, and ethical governance in a manner that challenges the citizenry to think critically about their roles within a democratic society. By assuming this role, the president can echo the sentiments of America's Founding Fathers, who championed the principles of popular sovereignty and civil dialogue.

The figurehead president fulfills several crucial functions without the need for extensive executive powers. Firstly, this position serves to unify the nation through speeches and public appearances that emphasize shared ideals and national values. Such a philosophical and inspirational approach promotes civic engagement and fosters an informed populace, something that is increasingly vital in today's political climate marked by polarization and discontent. As noted by scholars in political philosophy, a ceremonial leader can become a moral compass for the nation, shaping public discourse and guiding citizens toward greater civic responsibility.

Secondly, relinquishing significant executive authority from the presidency allows for a more balanced distribution of power among the branches of government. In a system where the presidency is primarily a symbolic figure, Congress and the judiciary can more effectively fulfill their roles in legislation and oversight, ensuring that laws and policies reflect the will of the people rather than the whims of a single executive. The tendency toward autocracy can diminish significantly when the president is observed simply as a figurehead whose primary objective is to promote democratic ideals and serve as a unifying presence, rather than a political operator with substantial decision-making power.

As the role of the president shifts to a ceremonial one, the command and operational leadership of the military shifts distinctly to generals and military scientists. This transition recognizes that those trained within the military—who possess

profound expertise, experience, and skills in defense matters—are best equipped to handle military leadership. Under this model, the military leadership is structured so that commanders, who are deeply familiar with the intricacies of military strategy and operations, direct the armed forces effectively while ensuring that their actions are aligned with the national objectives and ethical standards.

The transition of military command from the president to generals serves to maintain robust civilian control over the military, while also ensuring that strategic military decisions are made by individuals whose careers hinge on their understanding of military operations and expertise. This dissociation means that the military can respond swiftly and effectively to national defense needs without the politicization that can cloud judgment in traditional military-political engagements. Military leaders make decisions based on a wealth of field experience and specialized knowledge, which is indispensable when addressing complex security challenges.

In addition, integrating military scientists into leadership roles further strengthens the intelligence and capacity of military operations. Scientific expertise is vital in modern warfare, where technology and data analytics drive strategy and outcomes. Military scientists bring a unique perspective to military planning, employing evidence-based approaches to understand threats and devise innovative technological solutions. This ensures that decisions are underpinned by both military strategy and technological advancement, reflecting the modern realities of warfare wherein intelligence and predictive capabilities are foundational to success.

By structuring command within the military itself, this system emphasizes accountability. Only those directly involved in military operations bear direct responsibility for decisions made in the heat of conflict, thereby preventing a situation where political motivations could interfere with necessary military actions. This separation also reduces the likelihood of militaristic governance emerging from political leadership, reinforcing the principle that military operations must remain the domain of military professionals.

Moreover, this arrangement safeguards against the potential pitfalls of a military that is too closely aligned with political objectives. Military leadership retained within the generals and scientists allows them to maintain the necessary autonomy to execute their mandate effectively while adhering to ethical practices and standards of conduct. Such a balance helps to ensure that military power is wielded judiciously, reinforcing peace and stability in civil-military relations.

Transitioning to a framework where the president acts as a political philosopher aligns with the philosophical needs of a contemporary society in search of ethical guidance and inspiration. Such leaders would employ their platform to promote core civic values, such as justice, equality, and the respect for human rights, fostering an environment where citizens can engage in discussions about the principles that govern their lives.

As a political philosopher, the president would emphasize the importance of inclusive dialogue, cultivating an understanding of the complex challenges contemporary society faces. This approach is inherently beneficial because it empowers citizens to participate in the democratic process meaningfully. The president, as a philosophically driven leader, would prioritize civic education, encouraging the electorate to think critically about policies and engage in meaningful discourse.

Moreover, utilizing the president's role as a preacher-type leader enriches societal cohesion. By framing political discussions through the lens of ethical living and community well-being, the president can indeed galvanize the populace around common goals, thereby fostering understanding amidst diversity. Not only does this bolster democratic ideals, but it also presents a counter-narrative to the toxic polarization that often characterizes contemporary politics. A leader who inspires rather than commands can cultivate a political environment centered on empathy and mutual understanding, ultimately leading to more sustainable and effective governance.

The notion of a figurehead presidency requires a more profound systemic change—eliminating the executive branch as it exists today. In its absence, the focus would shift to a more nuanced understanding of governance, wherein designated bodies or councils serve to handle administrative matters. This transformation implies that a collective body, composed of informed citizens and representatives from diverse backgrounds, would engage in decision-making processes that reflect the nation's multifaceted nature.

In practice, this approach could manifest through the establishment of a council of experts and representatives overseeing various sectors of governance, such as health, education, and national security. Such councils would not only enhance democratic participation but also ensure that decisions are rooted in specialized knowledge rather than political maneuvering. This model draws on participatory governance principles,

which emphasize inclusive participation at every level of government and encourage citizens to be active stakeholders in the political process.

Moreover, the establishment of direct democracy tools, such as ballot initiatives and referendums, would complement this system, allowing citizens to vote directly on significant issues. This not only empowers citizens but also holds representatives accountable, thereby strengthening the democratic fabric of society.

In the absence of an executive branch, the potential for authoritarianism associated with concentrating unwarranted powers in the presidency is significantly reduced. By dispersing power among various bodies and emphasizing citizen participation, this system invites a healthier political dialogue and mitigates the risks inherent in bureaucratic overreach. Finally, there should be no age requirement to be President of the United States of America.

The case for a figurehead presidency, where the president serves primarily as a political philosopher and preacher-type leader, calls for radical change in the structure of American governance. This shift not only preserves the democratic ideals upon which the nation was founded but also enhances accountability, citizen engagement, and the dissociation of military leadership, placing both military command and strategic military decisions firmly in the hands of capable generals and military scientists. By empowering citizens to play a central role in the political process and ensuring the military's independence, America can foster a governance framework that prioritizes ethical leadership and civic responsibility. The transition toward such a model may very well represent the evolution needed in response to the complex challenges of our time, generating a government that reflects the true will and demands of its people—anchored in ideals that promote justice, equality, and unity.

XV. The Common of the Common

Here's another James Madison quote for you. "The new Constitution establishes a government, not of the rich, but of the common people, for their protection and happiness." In contemporary governance, the legitimacy, efficiency, and responsiveness of legislative processes are crucial for maintaining healthy democratic societies. The United States Congress, as the legislative body representing the interests of the populace, has traditionally relied on an electoral framework where representatives are

chosen through periodic elections. However, as disillusionment with political institutions grows, there is an emerging discourse advocating for the integration of direct democracy into the legislative process. By allowing citizens to vote directly on the laws that affect their lives, we can enhance civic engagement, accountability, and social equity in governance. This section explores how Congress could be elected while incorporating direct democratic principles to facilitate law-making in America.

In a reformed electoral process, congressional representatives can maintain their current structure of direct elections while adopting features that enhance transparency and accountability. Each state would continue to elect its senators and representatives as defined by the Constitution, ensuring that legislative bodies accurately reflect the electorate's will.

To reinvent the electoral process and ensure greater representation, several changes can be proposed. First, the implementation of ranked-choice voting could promote a more inclusive electoral process. This system allows voters to rank candidates based on preference rather than being constrained to a single choice. As a result, the elected representatives would better reflect the plurality of voices within their constituencies. This voting method not only reduces the likelihood of vote-splitting among similar candidates but also motivates politicians to appeal to a broader audience, reducing partisan polarization.

Second, open primaries could be adopted to replace the closed primary system used in many states. In open primaries, voters can select candidates from any party without registering as a member of that party. This change would encourage broader participation in the electoral process and provide more competitive races, directly benefiting the representation of diverse perspectives in Congress. By fostering an environment where more candidates can emerge and garner voter support, incumbents would also feel greater accountability to their constituents.

While elections ensure that Congress reflects the demographic and political diversity of the nation, the integration of direct democracy could revolutionize how laws are proposed, debated, and enacted. Direct democracy allows citizens to participate actively in governance, particularly through ballot initiatives, referendums, and recall elections. By providing mechanisms for ordinary people to vote on proposed laws or constitutional amendments, it directly empowers the electorate to shape their governance agenda.

One possible model is to establish a system where, after legislation is drafted and passed by Congress, any proposed law can be subjected to a public vote for final

approval. This direct vote would occur after a rigorous review process, including discussions, public hearings, and committees, ensuring that the legislation has been thoroughly deliberated by both elected representatives and citizens. In this scenario, Congress would still be responsible for drafting and proposing legislation; however, the final decision would ultimately rest with the people through a direct voting platform.

To implement this system effectively, a robust mechanism must be established to facilitate public engagement and education regarding proposed laws. Platforms for community discussions, state-organized forums, and digital workspaces could serve as key tools for citizens to access information and provide their input. It is vital that the legislative bodies commit to transparency to build trust between Congress and constituents, allowing voters to understand the implications of the laws before them. Such platforms could also provide structured feedback channels, ensuring that constituents' concerns and suggestions are adequately considered in the final version of the proposed law.

Additionally, the inclusion of direct democracy in law-making ensures that laws remain relevant to the populace. As societal values and priorities shift, a system that enables citizens to engage directly with legislative proposals helps to avoid stagnation and promotes adaptive legislation that reflects contemporary societal needs. For example, issues related to climate change, healthcare, and social justice can develop rapidly, and citizens should have the right to weigh in on laws that impact these sectors directly.

Crucial to the success of a dual-congressional and direct democracy system is the assurance of civic engagement and high voter participation. While countries with direct democratic mechanisms, such as Switzerland and some U.S. states, showcase high levels of civic engagement in certain instances, barriers remain that hinder consistent participation among the electorate. Factors contributing to low turnout, such as misinformation and lack of access to essential resources, must be actively addressed to ensure that all citizens can participate in the voting process effectively.

Educational initiatives can play a significant role in cultivating an informed electorate. State and local governments can collaborate with civic organizations to design educational campaigns that delve into the implications of proposed laws, the legislative process, and the overall importance of civic engagement. Workshops, online webinars, and community discussions can provide valuable resources for citizens to

educate themselves on complex issues and encourage dialogue among community members. Furthermore, leveraging technology through social media can enhance outreach efforts and promote an open, ongoing conversation around legislative proposals, increasing the likelihood of voter turnout.

Moreover, adopting simplified and user-friendly voting technologies can encourage greater participation. Online voting platforms have shown promise in increasing accessibility for voters, enabling participation for those who may face challenges accessing traditional voting methods. Ensuring these platforms are secure and reliable is critical for fostering public trust.

A concerted effort to motivate participation could also involve incentivizing civic engagement. States could implement programs that reward participation in elections and public votes—much like initiatives in some countries where citizens are encouraged to engage in governmental processes through financial incentives or public recognition for civic involvement. In doing so, states can create a culture that values active citizenship and enhances political awareness within the populace.

While the integration of direct democracy into the legislative process offers substantial benefits, it is not without its challenges. Critics often raise concerns regarding voter competence, the potential for misinformation, and the risk of majority tyranny. Each of these issues must be taken seriously to craft an effective model of governance.

Voter competence is a fundamental concern, as many critics argue that citizens may lack the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions on complex legislative proposals. However, implementing educational initiatives, ensuring transparent discourse, and fostering community engagement can empower voters to understand and evaluate proposed laws thoughtfully. Additionally, using simplified language and clear explanations presents a pathway to making legal language more accessible to the general public, thereby enhancing informed voting.

Misinformation campaigns, particularly those rampant within the digital realm, pose significant risks to democratic engagement. To counter this, media literacy campaigns can equip citizens with critical analysis skills and frameworks for discerning credible information. Furthermore, establishing accountability measures for public figures who spread misinformation can bolster public trust in the legislative process.

Finally, the risk of majority tyranny remains a pressing issue in any direct democracy model. Adequate measures, such as constitutional protections for minority

rights and judicial reviews of ballot initiatives, must be established to guard against the potential for abuses of power by a simple majority. Inclusive discussions that allow for multiple perspectives to be voiced promote a more equitable distribution of influence amidst diverse population segments.

The vision for American governance that integrates both congressional elections and direct democracy highlights the potential for a more engaged, responsive, and equitable political system. By maintaining traditional methods for electing Congress while allowing citizens to directly vote on laws, this model fosters a culture of civic participation and emphasizes the importance of representative accountability. The ongoing challenges presented by such a system—such as misinformation and potential tyranny—are surmountable through education, open dialogue, and a commitment to safeguarding minority rights.

By implementing these reforms, America can move toward a governance structure that emphasizes the voices of its citizens, preserves the democratic ideals championed by the founding fathers, and adapts swiftly to an ever-changing social landscape. Ultimately, this enhanced collaboration between Congress and the electorate has the potential to create a more just, equitable, and responsive democracy for all Americans.

The age restrictions placed on members of Congress and the Senate—set at a minimum of 25 years for representatives and 30 for senators—have sparked a persistent debate within the realm of American politics. While these age minimums were established to ensure that elected officials possess a certain level of maturity and experience, there is a compelling case to be made for the abolition of such restrictions altogether. Abolishing age restrictions would not only amplify the principles of inclusivity and representation but also foster a government that is genuinely reflective of the diverse perspectives found within society. This paper contends that age restrictions in Congress and the Senate should be abolished, allowing for greater opportunities for younger representatives, enhancing democratic engagement, and adjusting to the realities of modern politics.

One of the significant arguments in favor of abolishing age restrictions is the demographic representation of the nation. The current political landscape is dominated by an aging population, yet it does not accurately reflect the younger generations that make up a substantial portion of the electorate. As of recent statistics using 2022 census data, it has been found that about 30 percent of U.S. voters are aged 65 or older. While seasoned representation can provide insight and experience, it is pivotal for Congress to

also include perspectives from younger individuals who are more attuned to current social issues, technological advancements, and the challenges faced by contemporary constituents.

By eliminating age restrictions, Congress and the Senate would become more inclusive, allowing younger voices to participate in the legislative process. Although the concern is often raised that younger representatives may lack experience, research suggests that diverse cohorts produce more innovative solutions to pressing challenges. Furthermore, younger leaders can inspire civic engagement within their age groups and rally support on issues directly impacting younger Americans, such as climate change, education reform, and social equity.

Abolishing age restrictions would also encourage a higher level of political participation among younger citizens. When young people see representatives in Congress and the Senate who reflect their age and experiences, they are more likely to feel represented and engage with the political process. Encouraging youth participation not only enhances electoral engagement but also nurtures future leaders by providing them with valuable experience and exposure to the legislative process.

The notion that age confers wisdom and competence is not uniformly applicable; one need only consider the numerous cases of younger individuals who have exhibited remarkable leadership skills and capabilities in various spheres, including technology, environmental activism, and social justice movements. These younger leaders often possess significant relevance and insight that can be harnessed within political structures. By eliminating age restrictions, there is a potential to generate a more dynamic political dialogue that embraces innovation and adaptability—qualities that are essential in addressing today's complexities and uncertainties.

The imposition of age restrictions stems from an underlying societal bias toward aging individuals, creating a perception that older individuals are inherently more capable than their younger counterparts. This institutionalized ageism overlooks the unique attributes and qualities younger politicians bring to the table, such as adaptability, creativity, and a fresh approach to governance. Such biases not only limit the pool of candidates but also perpetuate stereotypes that can undermine the capabilities of individuals based solely on their age.

Conversely, the abolition of age restrictions challenges these ingrained stereotypes and fosters a culture that values ability over age. It sends a powerful message that leadership and governance are not solely defined by age but rather by skills, vision, and the ability to represent the electorate effectively. This shift can

significantly enrich the political discourse, encouraging a more informed and reflective dialogue around issues that affect all walks of life.

Moreover, maintaining age restrictions for Congress and the Senate can lead to unintended consequences, such as delaying the necessary generational turnover within political institutions. Younger individuals often represent the emerging views and concerns of their peers, and without an avenue for them to participate actively in governance, critical issues risk being overlooked or inadequately addressed.

By enforcing arbitrary age restrictions, bureaucratic inertia can result, creating a political landscape in which long-serving members continue to dominate, potentially stifling the emergence of new ideas and perspectives. Consequently, young leaders who may possess the intellectual fortitude and insight required to lead may be sidelined simply due to their age, reinforcing the status quo and limiting the progressive evolution of government.

In conclusion, abolishing age restrictions for members of Congress and the Senate presents a compelling opportunity for revitalizing American democracy. By fostering greater representation of diverse perspectives, promoting youth engagement in politics, and challenging the negative stereotypes associated with aging, we can cultivate a political environment that reflects the realities of 21st-century America. The discourse surrounding the age of political leaders is not merely a matter of age; it pertains to the principles of inclusivity, innovation, and the responsibility of our democratic institutions to adapt to the changing dynamics of society.

Thus, the time has come to rethink age restrictions in political leadership, placing merit and capability as the foremost qualifications for those who seek to represent the American populace. A government that embraces the full spectrum of its demographic composition is not merely an aspiration but a necessity for a vibrant democratic future.

XVI. Nine is Not Enough

The U.S. Supreme Court, as the highest judicial authority in the land, carries the weighty responsibility of interpreting the Constitution and adjudicating critical legal issues. However, the Court's often disproportionately high power and the challenges posed by its composition—many argue it operates with minimal accountability to the

electorate—have prompted discussions on more equitable alternatives. This section proposes a transformative model: replacing the Supreme Court with a 50-person council, where one judge is selected from each state, with decisions subjected to a national direct democracy vote for final approval. This model aims to enhance representation, accountability, and citizen participation in the judicial process.

The proposed council would consist of one representative judge from each of the 50 states, ensuring that all regions of the country have a voice in the judicial decision-making process. This structure mitigates the risks associated with a single Supreme Court dominated by life-tenured justices, fostering a greater diversity of perspectives and lived experiences in judicial interpretations. Such representation recognizes that states have unique legal cultures and social contexts, necessitating that judicial voices reflect such diversity.

The selection process for council members should prioritize merit, ensuring that qualified judges—chosen by their respective states through a transparent process—bring their expertise and understand the nuances of relevant legal issues to the table. These judges could be selected via a combination of appointed committees, public nominations, and elections, establishing a framework for representatives who genuinely reflect the will of their constituents. This method can simultaneously promote competence and public trust in the judicial system.

In this new model, judges would convene to deliberate and vote on legal rulings, utilizing a collaborative decision-making process rather than relying on the individual interpretations of a small panel of justices. By assembling a larger body of legal experts, the council can foster thorough discussions, engage in diverse perspectives, and arrive at more inclusive rulings that consider the multifaceted nature of American society.

Each council member would have the opportunity to voice their opinions, share insights, and present arguments before a vote takes place. This democratic approach to judicial decision-making not only emphasizes deliberation but also encourages judges to collaborate on creating precedent-setting rulings that transcend regional differences, ultimately fostering national cohesion.

The voting process could employ a weighted system, where decisions are made through a combination of majority rules and consensus, ensuring that the views of minority groups on the council are given due consideration. In instances of significant disagreement, mechanisms such as further deliberation periods or revisiting contentious cases can promote comprehensive understanding before final rulings are made.

To further enhance democratic engagement within this framework, the final approval of council decisions would be subjected to a national direct democracy vote. This mechanism empowers citizens to actively participate in determining the laws that shape their lives. By allowing the electorate to vote directly on the rulings made by the council, the separation between judicial authority and popular sentiment is bridged, reinforcing the democratic notion that government derives its power from the consent of the governed.

The structure of the direct democracy vote entails organizing national referendums on significant rulings, where citizens can cast their ballots on whether they uphold or reject specific judicial decisions made by the council. This voting process should be structured to ensure accessibility and participation, utilizing secure electronic systems that allow citizens to vote remotely while also preserving the integrity of the process. Public education campaigns would be crucial to inform citizens about the implications of rulings and the importance of their vote, ensuring that they can make informed decisions.

Direct democracy, as evidenced in various states and countries around the world, has proven effective in engaging the electorate in governance-related issues. By implementing a national democracy vote, the council not only becomes responsive to the people's needs but also cultivates a sense of ownership among citizens in legal matters, promoting ongoing civic engagement.

While transitioning to a 50-person council and incorporating direct democracy in judicial rulings presents numerous advantages, it is essential to address potential concerns. Critics may argue that this model could lead to the politicization of judicial decisions, with citizens voting based on fluctuating public opinions rather than legal principles. However, careful structuring of the selection process for judges and educational outreach about the judicial system can significantly mitigate these risks. Furthermore, while public opinion is an essential consideration, it should not overrule foundational legal principles enshrined in the Constitution.

Another concern revolves around the feasibility and coordination of national referendums. However, this can be addressed through established frameworks and protocols for voting. Technological advancements, coupled with detailed logistical planning, can facilitate smooth and organized voting processes. Additionally, constitutional safeguards could be instituted to ensure that the essential values of the judiciary are not overshadowed by fleeting public sentiment.

The proposed transformation of the U.S. judicial system through the establishment of a 50-person council, with direct democracy for final approval of rulings, presents an innovative approach to governance. By enhancing representation, accountability, and citizen participation in the judicial process, this model fosters an equitable understanding of law that considers state-specific contexts while embracing national unity. It serves to bolster public trust in the judicial system and ensure that rulings reflect the will of the people while retaining respect for foundational legal principles. As our society continues to evolve, the need for an adaptive and responsive judicial system becomes increasingly vital, making this proposal not only timely but necessary for the future of American democracy.

XVII. Peace is the Word of the Day

In an era marked by complex global dynamics and varied security threats, the role of the United States as a military power continues to be a topic of intense debate. As a nation forged from principles of liberty, justice, and the rule of law, the United States has long been a proponent of democratic values on the global stage. However, a fundamental question arises: should the U.S. engage in offensive military actions or limit itself to defensive strategies focused solely on protecting its sovereignty and responding to direct attacks? This essay offers a comprehensive argument against offensive military operations, asserting that such actions are not only morally questionable but also counterproductive to American interests and global stability, advocating instead for a strict defensive posture.

Engaging in military offensives draws the U.S. into complex ethical dilemmas that often culminate in significant civilian casualties, destruction, and humanitarian crises. The very act of projecting military force into a sovereign nation, even under the guise of intervention or preemptive strikes, raises profound moral questions about the justification for such actions. International humanitarian law, which aims to mitigate the suffering caused by armed conflict, underscores the importance of protecting civilians; however, it is often disregarded in offensive scenarios where tactical advantages are pursued regardless of the consequences.

The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan serve as poignant reminders of the potential for offensive military actions to descend into protracted conflicts that yield

more harm than good. While initially justified by the need to combat terrorism or eliminate perceived threats, the occupation phase revealed the catastrophic impact of these wars on civilian populations. Millions suffered displacement, loss of life, and the destruction of their homes and communities. The moral cost of offensive warfare is staggering; every civilian death not only shifts the moral scales but also generates resentment, fosters extremism, and undermines the very security that justify military interventions in the first place.

When the United States engages in offensive military operations, it risks alienating other nations and diminishing its soft power—a critical component of American foreign policy that relies on building alliances through diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchange. Countries with offensive military ambitions often provoke backlash from nations that perceive such actions as threats to their sovereignty and security. The cycle of violence initiated by offensive operations can create environments conducive to hatred, unrest, and extremism, ultimately leading to retaliatory actions against the U.S. and its allies.

Furthermore, the American involvement in conflicts that are not directly related to its national security interests can erode public support for military engagements. As the U.S. experiences extended conflicts with unclear objectives, costs and benefits become scrutinized. The longer military campaigns continue, the more the American public voice concerns regarding the effectiveness and morality of such interventions. This dynamic further complicates U.S. foreign policy, steering it away from a focus on diplomacy and cooperative engagement to militarism and unilateralism.

Instead of engaging offensively, which places the U.S. on the path of perpetual conflict, U.S. foreign policy should emphasize diplomacy and conflict resolution. By fostering cooperative relationships with other nations, prioritizing diplomacy as the primary tool for international relations, and utilizing economic sanctions only as a means of deterrence, the United States can promote global stability and protect its interests without compromising its moral standing.

Adopting a defensive military strategy not only upholds ethical standards but also aligns with the constitutional mandate of the U.S. military to protect the homeland. National security should prioritize direct threats to American soil, responding proportionately to aggressions that jeopardize the safety and well-being of citizens. This approach reflects both prudence and moral integrity, as it recognizes the realities of modern warfare while also adhering to the principles of just war theory.

Defensive military actions are fundamentally different from offensive strikes. Defense entails protecting the nation against actual or imminent threats, responding to direct attacks rather than initiating conflicts. Engaging in defense provides clarity of purpose; military actions are undertaken as a necessity rather than as a strategy for global domination or intervention. This distinction is pivotal because it reinforces the legitimacy of the military's role while ensuring that military resources are deployed solely in service of safeguarding the nation's interests, not in pursuit of abstract political agendas.

Moreover, defensive actions can operate effectively within the scope of international law, allowing the U.S. to maintain its standing as a nation committed to upholding global norms. Legal scholars emphasize that a strictly defensive posture minimizes risks associated with violations of the sovereignty of other nations, reducing the potential for international backlash and creating an environment conducive to cooperative relationships among nations.

The trend of offensive warfare can lead to the militarization of foreign relations—a troubling trajectory that can spiral into constant conflict, as nations respond to perceived threats with aggression rather than diplomacy. Military engagement must remain a last resort, justified only by self-defense or under a clear legal framework established by international law. When offensive military operations become the norm, they reshape the global perception of U.S. intentions and actions.

Suspicion breeds mistrust, undermining years of investment in diplomatic relations and international cooperation. As perceived aggressors, offensively inclined nations may provoke others to adopt militaristic approaches, stoking global tensions and destabilizing regions. The world must move toward a model where states resolve their differences through dialogue and cooperation rather than military coercion.

In contrast, a culture of defense promotes mutual respect and understanding. By approaching international relations with a defensive posture, the United States can position itself as a nation that values diplomacy and seeks peaceful resolutions to conflicts. This approach engenders trust with allies and creates an environment where even adversaries recognize the importance of dialogue over conflict.

History teaches us valuable lessons regarding the impact of offensive military actions. The Vietnam War, for instance, serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of dubious military interventions that were predicated on flawed justifications. The extensive loss of life, destabilization of the region, and continued suffering experienced

by Vietnamese citizens and American veterans expose the moral failings inherent in military offensives. These lessons remind us of the heavy toll on human lives and society that arise from engaging in military warfare absent a clear and ethical rationale.

Furthermore, as we grapple with the evolving landscape of modern warfare, Presidents and lawmakers must prioritize diplomatic engagement with an emphasis on conflict prevention rather than aggression. By investing in preventive diplomacy, prioritizing international cooperation for conflict resolution, and promoting economic agreements, the United States can work towards addressing the underlying causes of conflicts before they escalate to armed confrontations.

Emerging technologies, from cybersecurity to unmanned systems, present alternative avenues for defending national interests without resorting to offensive military measures. By focusing on innovative strategies for defense, the United States can emerge as a global leader in peace-promoting initiatives that prioritize collaboration over military aggression.

The argument against offensive military actions rests on a commitment to upholding morality, protecting national sovereignty, and promoting global stability. Engaging in offensives threatens civilian lives, destabilizes regions, and diminishes the United States' standing as a beacon of democracy and justice in international relations. Instead, the U.S. should embrace a defensive military strategy focused on protecting its homeland from direct threats while fostering diplomacy and cooperation to resolve conflicts. Transitioning away from an offensive mindset not only aligns with ethical considerations but also reflects a necessary shift in the approach to governance and international relations. By embedding principles of liberty and ethical conduct in military operations, the U.S. can shape a future where the military might serve as a tool for defense rather than aggression. Ultimately, this is a critical step toward a more just and peaceful world, embodying the values that have long defined the American spirit.

Conclusion

Introducing a More Perfect Community

Life is valuable. We, as Americans, should do everything we can to protect the lives of our fellow citizens. We cannot force our value of life on our sister nations. However, we should be open to accept any person from any other country who wants to become a citizen of this country. Furthermore, rehabilitation is the wave of the future. Justice is a spectre of the past. Universal peace is a myth, yet conflict resolution is a real practice. Also, an offensive military is a crowd of barbarians. A defensive military is a force of honorable heroes. Moreover, free homes, food, water, hygiene products, and universal healthcare should be the cornerstone of our civilization. Those who want more, should work to acquire more. Their service will not be in vain. Finally, we should do all we can to protect our environment and advocate for international environmentalism without militarism. Bullying and mobbing ought to be fleeting in society, and it is difficult to define it in an exact nature, but we should strive to reduce it as much as possible with rehabilitation. This should be the law of this luscious land.

